

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Ernest L. Golden

Ernest L. Golden was born on May 21, 1923 in Athens, Georgia. His father, Belva Golden, was a truck driver and sometime bootlegger, and his mother, Viola Golden, was a laundry presser. The oldest of four children, Golden graduated from Athens High and Industrial School in 1942.

Golden accepted a civil service job at Pearl Harbor primarily to escape discrimination against African Americans in the South. He arrived in Hawai'i on a troop transport boat in 1943. Along with other civil service workers from the Mainland, Golden lived in CHA-3, civilian housing area three, the racially segregated housing near Hickam Field. He worked as a laborer on Ford Island until 1946.

Following World War II, Golden remained in the Islands and attended art school. He made displays for Bader's The Display House, drove a bus for the Honolulu Rapid Transit, and carried passenger luggage for Hampton Brazell's airport porter service.

In 1959, Golden and his partners formed Honolulu Airport Porter Services. Golden retired in 1974 and established the Hawaiian *Hale* Supper Club in Athens. When the club closed in 1976, Golden returned to Hawai'i. He is owner and general manager of another airport porter business, Versatile Services, Inc.

Ernest Golden married Evangeline Silva in 1951. The Goldenes, who reside in Lā'ie, are the parents of four children.

Tape No. 22-67-1-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ernest L. Golden (EG)

April 21, 1993

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Ernest Golden on April 21, 1993 and we're at his office in the airport industrial area in Honolulu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, let's get started, Ernest. Why don't we start by having you tell me when and where you were born.

EG: I was born in Athens, Georgia, May 21, 1923.

WN: Tell me something about your dad.

EG: My father [Belva Golden]?

WN: Yes.

EG: Well, first of all, my father and mother divorced when I was nine years old—separated when I was nine. The divorce, I think, came sometime afterwards. My father was from Mississippi. I don't know how to. . . . My father was quite a man. My father was a big man first of all. My father was six [feet] four [inches] or six five, somewhere around there. My father, even after the separation, was always in the neighborhood. Now I grew up in a pretty bad neighborhood. My neighborhood was called Over-the-River. Over-the-River is like over the tracks.

WN: Now this is in Athens, Georgia which is a . . .

EG: This is in Athens, Georgia.

WN: . . . pretty diverse town because it's a university town [i.e., University of Georgia], right?

EG: Yes, it is. Athens, because it is a university town, was and is a cut, I suppose, above other Southern towns, at that time, of a similar size. I think we moved to town from the country when I was about five years old, five or six. And we moved on Second Street which was Over-the-River. I'm saying all of this because there's a point. Even after the separation of my mother and father, my father was always in the neighborhood. Now this is looking back. This is as an adult looking back on the influences that my father would have had on me as an

individual now. First of all, my mother and father were friends even after the divorce. He was in the neighborhood. We're talking about a neighborhood where weekends were fights. There were fights. There was drinking and there was fighting. And I suppose I did have a strong family thing going for me even with the separation of my father and mother. But my father was in the neighborhood and my father was very much of a man because of size.

Let me give you an example. There was one situation I recall where one of the drunks, bad (person) in the neighborhood, was terrorizing the neighborhood with a shotgun. And somebody said, "Go get Golden." And this was on Second Street. My father at that time lived on Third Street, about a block up. So they went and got my father. And my father approached this man with a brick and made him put the shotgun down. These things remain with you. He was good with children. Children loved him and he loved children, not only my family, not only my brother and I, but other children, my cousins and other children in the neighborhood. He was a gentle man but yet he was bad. But he did not start a fight, and we're talking about a neighborhood where they had fights. I don't know how I survived. I think my influence with my father (is) the reason I survived. The one driving force I had going for me was to get out of that neighborhood.

My father left, I think, when I was quite young. I dare say I was maybe less than twelve years old when my father left Athens and went to Atlanta. And we saw him then infrequently. To go back a bit, before he and my mother separated, I visited with him in Mississippi. He went back to Mississippi after having left and come to Athens and married, and I was four years old when we went back, and I spent some time with his parents—about a year. Got to know that side of the family. But over the years, after I'd come to Hawai'i, I'd go back and visit with him, and we had a very good relationship. Even when I was growing up, I was under his influence even after (the) separation because he still lived in the neighborhood. During the time he and my mother were together he would discipline me. There were times when he has spanked me. And I look at what they call child abuse now, and I can't understand it because I think that the (laughs) spanking my father gave me was deserved. And he used a razor strap to do it. But this was usually after having talked with me first. My father always talked with me first, and maybe twice before the spanking came about.

WN: What kind of work did he do?

EG: He was a truck driver. He drove a truck for a coal yard. He did that, and then he sold whiskey. That was an interesting story, by the way, because (laughs). . . .

WN: This is legal whiskey?

EG: No. This is bootleg. This was white lightning. He did that all of his life even though he worked. He always kept a legitimate job whenever possible, but it was a way of life, I guess.

WN: Did he make it, too?

EG: No, no. They would go to the distillers somewhere. This always kept him in trouble with the law. There were (many) times when he was trying to outrun the law or the police. He had a reputation with the police department. (Laughs) My father was Belva Golden. Belva Golden was quite a man, quite a man.

- WN: Now you said he was six feet four. People said that when---you remember when there was a fight and they would call him. Was it only because of his physical stature or did he have some kind of status in the community?
- EG: Status in the community (he), I suppose, was someone who did not back down, who approached the situation. . . . I suppose, it must've been because he would do what was supposed to be done. The law seldom came over and did anything Over-the-River. You'd have to call them, I think. And he had no special status in the community other than one bad man meeting another bad man, I guess.
- WN: What do you mean by "bad"?
- EG: "Bad" in the sense that. . . . There should be another term for it.
- WN: Well, "bad" today, you know, when kids say "bad," "bad" means "good."
- EG: "Bad" means "good." "Bad" means "good." My father---I had to explain that to you, to explain "bad," I suppose. In the fight world, who was the last fighter who was so "bad"? The one that they sent to prison? I can't recall his name now. Recently.
- WN: Sonny Liston?
- EG: No, the one who's in prison now.
- WN: Oh, Mike Tyson.
- EG: Mike Tyson. See, Mike Tyson was "bad." Muhammad Ali was "bad." Okay? These are legitimate "bad," and I suppose my father stepped in, walked the line between that sort of thing. He didn't seem to fear. My father wasn't afraid of anyone. If you bothered him, you had to deal with him. That's the way he was. He did not go out of his way to create any problems. He would never under any circumstances create a confrontation. But if one came his way, he did not back away from (it). I suppose this is what I mean. If the police bothered him and he thought they were wrong, they had to deal with him. Because at that time, six feet four was real big. I'm talking seventy, sixty-five years ago. And people at that time---we have a lot of six-, seven-foot people now but the tallest basketball player in those days usually was about six feet. This was your center. To be six feet in those days---six feet four in those days---was big. And to have the muscle and the guts and everything that go along with that made you an imposing individual. And this is what he was. I didn't understand some of his gentleness, though, until years later.
- WN: What are examples of that?
- EG: I suppose his relationship with my wife, with my daughter, with me, and with other people. Just a gentle, caring person. I opened a club when I retired in 1974. Opened up a club in Athens---a supper club [Hawaiian Hale Supper Club]. And during the time I was there [1974-76] he was living in Atlanta, but he would come down every weekend. And clubs within themselves could be a source of trouble. And even though this club never had any trouble in it, he was just sort of quietly behind me, supportive. He was a very gentle man in a sense.

WN: Tell me something about the neighborhood, your neighborhood.

EG: Over-the-River?

WN: Over-the-River.

EG: Well, first of all, if you completed elementary school, you had made quite an accomplishment. No one expected you to go to high school. The neighborhood itself was. . . . I don't know what it was originally. I think originally we moved (into a) neighborhood (that) at one time must have been a red-light district. There was a river that separated this part of town from the commercial part of town, because right across the river from where we were was a slaughterhouse, and they had some lumberyards and the coal yards and things like that on the other side of the river. We were on the side of the river that was, if you want to call it, residential. The town was about a mile or so—the heart of town—about a mile or so from there. But the Oconee river divided . . .

WN: The what river?

EG: Oconee.

WN: Oconee?

EG: Oconee. O-C-O-N-E-E, I think. And Water Street paralleled Oconee River. And then First, Second, Third, Fourth Streets ran into Water Street. First Street was the beginning of, was set aside for the White mill workers because there were several mills there.

WN: What kind of mills?

EG: Cotton mills---fabric mills, I think. Fabric mills because you're in a cotton belt, right? So they were fabric mills. So First Street was mill workers, more or less, but all White.

WN: So these are working-class Whites.

EG: Yes, working-class Whites. And then Second Street was the beginning of the Black neighborhood. And we were on Second Street, (there was) Second Street, Third Street, Fourth Street. When you passed Fourth Street you reached Madison Avenue which was (the) beginning (of) another section. So between Second Street and Third Street is where I grew up until the time that I left Athens. As I said, it was a pretty rough neighborhood. Teenage pregnancies. Most of the people worked when they could get jobs. They were not skilled workers.

WN: Did Blacks work in that mill? Or those mills?

EG: I don't recall any Blacks working in (the) mills, if they did it was as a janitor. I don't recall any Blacks working in those mills, no. It was set aside for. . . . Those jobs were considered, I suppose, some of the better jobs, and I don't recall anyone working there except Whites.

We had Broad Street which led to town from River Street, okay? Madison Avenue led to town from River Street. First, Second, Third and Fourth Street were between Broad Street

and Madison Avenue. So you had two ways to go into town from where I lived. You either went Madison Avenue or went Broad Street. Now, when you came to Broad Street, you had to cross First Street. And this is one area where you had to fight your way to get home.

WN: Now these are with the Whites?

EG: These Whites, yeah. If they weren't working and they were out there in the front of, mingling around, the only thing they had to do was pick up a fight with some Black person who's trying to go home, or trying to get to town.

WN: How often would these fights occur?

EG: Whenever they (laughs) had the time to start one.

WN: These are the mill workers themselves? What about the children of the mill workers?

EG: These were adults or teenagers. If the teenagers saw us coming there was going to be a fight. I remember one time, I know I was lucky. There was a store right across the bridge. Now, there was Broad Street Bridge and Madison Avenue Bridge, so (you had to) cross the Oconee River when you wanted to go into town. As you cross Broad Street Bridge, going towards town, there's a little community store that sold a variety of things. And we (had gone there for) kerosene because we had no electricity. And two or three kids and I had gone to the store together to get kerosene. And we had to get the kerosene in a (glass) jug that had a handle on it, and it was a gallon jug. (There) was a handle, to carry it. And as we were approaching First Street, there was a confrontation (with) these kids. Heck, I must've been nine, ten years old. I don't think I was twelve. No, maybe I was ten or eleven years old. But the kids with me were younger than that. And the kids that was getting ready to start harassing us was teenagers. But one came close enough in taunting or whatever he was going to do. And I took the jug by the handle and swung it overhand at his head. And thank God for missing—really—because I don't (know) where I would've been. . . . I know I would've (had to leave) if I'd hit him. I would've been in jail right now or somewhere, if not dead.

This is not an isolated situation. This is just one that I recall because even before we moved there, I lived in my grandparents' house and that was further out. We had to pass several mills in order to get to school. This must have been when I first started school. We'd have to run because there was no fighting. We'd run to get by these places or try to go some other way. Sometimes try to sneak by on a trestle so they couldn't see us. And if they saw us and then they start stoning you on the trestle, you wouldn't have nowhere to run then (laughs) because you couldn't jump off. It's a railroad trestle. So in other words, instead of going up the street on the roadway where you knew you were going to pass these guys. . . . These were adults, and we were going to elementary school, and you knew you had to pass these guys, so you're trying to find another way, (laughs) and they'd catch you on the trestle. It was interesting. But I don't know what else to say about Over-the-River.

WN: How far physically were you away from the university, for example?

EG: Oh, not more than two miles. A little more than a mile, maybe, walking distance. We were close.

WN: Did anybody in your neighborhood work for the university?

EG: Yes, there was one man—I don't recall his name—he lived between Second and Third Street, (his) was considered a good job because he was employed by the university. I don't know what he was doing, but yes, (there) was one man that I recall.

WN: How big was Athens about that time?

EG: Athens had a population of about 27,000. Athens was the center. People from various [outlying] towns [would] come into Athens to do most of their shopping because I think it was the biggest town within a (group) of smaller towns. But Athens itself had about 27,000 people.

WN: And taking Athens as a whole, was it, would you consider it a very stratified town?

EG: Stratified in what sense?

WN: Well, were there poor Blacks, poor Whites, and then wealthy Whites . . .

EG: Yes.

WN: . . . in the same town?

EG: Yes.

WN: I would imagine so.

EG: Yes. Very definitely so. And. . . .

WN: Was there any type of intermingling?

EG: Now, at this time, my interest would not have been of such that I would have been able to make a good assessment of that sort of thing. First, you had the business district. I think at that time most of the businesses were owned by Jews. Milledge Avenue was the money street. This was where wealthy people lived, and I'm talking about beautiful homes. Those homes now have been converted into frat houses and things like that, big-type colonial homes. And what these people did, I suppose, these were bankers and other movers and shakers of Athens. The Jewish people had most of your businesses, I think, downtown, and I'm speaking of shoe stores and men's shops and women's shops and jewelry stores and things like that.

The university crowd, the university faculty, I don't know where they lived. Then you had the farmers. Athens wasn't too far removed from the farm area either because you have a lot of farmers. Being a small town there were farms all around—cotton farms. Then you had your mill workers. Then you had the Blacks, who were the bottom of the totem pole. Some Blacks worked as servants in the homes, domestic workers. This was one source of employment. I suppose most of the people who lived Over-the-River, where I lived, fell in this category—domestic workers and things like that. My father and mother were a little bit different because my mother worked also. She was a laundry worker. And as I had said

before, my father was a truck driver for a coal company. My uncle who shared the house—he and my aunt—and this was my uncle by marriage—we shared the same house when we first moved to Second Street. My uncle worked as a truck driver and delivered for a lumberyard. My aunt looked after all of us—my mother's two children; there was my brother and I. And she had two children. And we all lived in a four-room house on Second Street. That was when we first moved into town.

WN: Was the house that you lived in pretty typical of that area?

EG: Yes. Like I said before, I think it had been a red-light district, and it had been one of the houses. Interestingly enough during the time we lived there—we're talking White prostitution, the house right below us, less than twenty-five feet distance, was still practicing prostitution. I was nine years old [when] I used to run errands for the head lady there.

WN: Did you know what you were doing or what that was at that time?

EG: I guess I knew but didn't know, you know?

WN: (Laughs) Good answer (laughs).

EG: There (were) all these men coming and going. And this . . .

WN: Whites or Blacks?

EG: Whites. (They were) all Whites. She was White. If there were Black prostitutes, I don't know where they were. This was not an area for Black prostitutes. The [prostitution] houses started on River Street, and the first house, I think, that was still practicing prostitution during the time I was growing up there was about halfway between First and Second Street. There must have been at that time two or three houses between First and Second Street. And then on the corner of Second Street (and) Water Street (was the house) that I was mentioning and we were the first house on Second Street. And then on up the river going toward Third Street, there was two or three more houses all on Water Street. So prostitution was there during the time that I was growing up there. That might give you an indication of what it was like. I grew up in a red-light district. And finally—prostitution moved out for some reason, whether it was banned. They were not operating illegally. They were operating evidently within the sanctions of the law. And I think that the people who ran Athens, the politicians, possibly allowed it because of the university. And I'm assuming that this was an outlet for university students—male students—to have sexual outlet. I'm sure this is why it was permitted. Athens was quite a football town, and whenever there (were) games—University of Georgia had games with a lot of the other colleges—you would have the visitors in [town], so I'm sure that this was a source of income for prostitution. I'm just thinking about it now, because I never thought about it before . . .

WN: It was probably a transient town, right, because of the university there?

EG: It was. Nine months out of the year it was quite a brisk place, and then after that, I think about three months out of the year, it sort of died down. But during those nine months Athens would come alive, I mean, because university students seemed to have carte blanche to do pretty much what they wanted to—and they were not necessarily a quiet group (laughs). No,

they weren't a subdued group by any stretch of the imagination. Those guys could get pretty wild. And they were not all students, because you have football games, you have alumni, and these are adults, and there was a lot of drinking. But this was a dry county now. Liquor was not legal, but there was plenty of it around. It was white lightning. And it was plentiful. And this is why I suppose the bootlegger survived, and I suppose this is one of the reasons why my father and others (whom) I knew bootlegged whiskey—both Black and White. So it was pretty much a way of life—an acceptable way of life for many, and I grew up in that. I went to [East Athens] Elementary School, about a mile, I suppose, from where we lived. But no kid in that neighborhood was expected to finish elementary school. He was expected to go to work. I think it was unique because there weren't very many kids that I knew from that neighborhood went to high school when they finished.

WN: Now your elementary school was integrated?

EG: No.

WN: Where did the White mill-worker kids go?

EG: For elementary school, there was a school in east Athens in an all-White neighborhood. More or less those employed by the mill. Somewhere over there was the White elementary school, but I can't pinpoint it now. I do know that further over, well, there was a school. And whether all of the Whites went to that school. . . . But it was quite removed from where we attended school. It may have been two or three miles from where we attended school. So no, the school was not integrated. There was nothing integrated.

WN: Your teachers were White or Black?

EG: My teachers were all Black. From the time that I finished high school, my teachers were all Black. Elementary school, all Black. And then junior high, then high school—all Black.

WN: So in terms of your outlook, here you are growing up in a poor side of town where probably one of the main activities or industries would be the University [of Georgia]. Now, was there any kind of thought in your mind at that time that someday you may go to that university, or was it so far out of your . . .

EG: It was so far---it was such a farfetched possibility. None, whatsoever. There was an interesting situation during the time I was there. I was in high school, and I was working for a Jewish man. I must've been probably a junior in high school. The president, I think, of the University of Georgia, had proposed that a building be set aside on the campus for Black students who wanted to study. This was such an unheard of thing. They weren't going to integrate the building, they were just going to have a building on that campus. The University of Georgia has a vast campus. You see, Athens came about because of the university. So it was a vast campus, and I can't understand, looking back, I can't even see where it would have made any difference. But Governor [Eugene] Talmadge got word of it, and he fired the president and I don't know how many members of the faculty. And because of it [i.e., the proposal], the University of Georgia was taken off the accredited list for a period of time—some years. But that's just an aside as to anyone's expectations of ever going to the University of Georgia.

WN: So there were Black students on campus?

EG: No.

WN: There weren't Black students?

EG: There was none. This president had suggested something of this nature. He suggested it. And the governor said no, stop and desist and let's get rid of you.

WN: I see.

EG: We won't even entertain the thought nor the person who brought the thought about. No, there was no such thing. There was no thought of integration at that time. I think, though, this was a driving force for me to get away. The whole thing, everything that I grew up with. This may be the reason I'm in Hawai'i now. To get away from Athens.

WN: I didn't ask you about your mother. Tell me about her.

EG: My mother [Viola Johnson Golden] was, I suppose, like mothers are. She and I were very close. She was small. My mother may have been five [feet] one [inch] or five two. She was considered quite attractive. I think she and my father eloped. She was the older of a family consisting of three girls and five boys. She was the oldest of the group of my uncles and aunts. My mother was a Johnson—her maiden name. She was Viola Johnson. I got to know my grandparents [Lum and Mamie Johnson] quite well because we lived close to them up until the time that I was, oh, four or five years old.

WN: In Athens?

EG: This was out in the country, a few miles from town. You could drive four miles and be out in the country. So we were approximately four or five miles from downtown Athens. And you asked me a while ago about University of Georgia. University of Georgia is downtown Athens. Approximately two to three blocks from the university entrance gate is the city hall. So University of Georgia is right downtown also.

My grandfather [Lum Johnson] was a sharecropper. At that age I couldn't have known that much about it but, [he was] successful. He had quite a large farm he was sharecropping on. But my mother, from the time that I knew, always worked in town, and I think in the same laundry for quite a number of years. So she was never much at home. She was a working mother. She had two children during this time we're talking about.

WN: You're the oldest, right?

EG: I'm the oldest. I'm the oldest of four.

WN: There was you and your brother during this time that you're talking about.

EG: Yes.

WN: Then you had two sisters later.

EG: Yeah. These are the early years of my mother. She was the oldest of her sisters and brothers.

WN: So she was working a lot and then you were not too far from your grandparents. And didn't you say your uncle and aunt lived there too, in the house?

EG: Well, this is prior to that. When we left the farm, where I spent a lot of time with my grandparents and uncles and aunts, I was only about two years younger than my youngest uncle. So I grew up with them almost like a younger [brother]. Here I had several older "brothers," and then two older "sisters," and I was (a) part of that household. It's a very choice position to grow up in. (WN laughs.) (I am) a baby and (I have) all these big brothers and big sisters, right?

WN: Let me turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, we were talking about your mother, and you had your uncles—you had an uncle—so you had pretty much an extended family living there.

EG: Yes, this is during the time before we moved into town. I knew she was my mother, but since she was working, I spent a lot of time with my uncles and aunts—grew up in the household with my grandparents. My mother and father both were working in town. And then we were moved into town, my mother continued to work, and my aunt pretty much was responsible for raising me since my mother was working. The relationship between my mother and I have always been good. I suppose [my] being an older child she seemed to have given me more credit than I really think I deserved. She always said, "Ernest is a good boy," even after I'd left—even after I'd been away. She was a hardworking woman. She had to be because from the time I was nine years old until, oh, she retired after I was over here in Hawai'i, she worked. She worked to raise two children and then three, and later four—pretty much alone—all by herself. And it wasn't easy. It was difficult, very difficult. When I was able to, I tried to help as much as I could.

WN: Did you help her at all with chores or any kind of employment?

EG: Up until the time I left Athens [in 1942] I was attending school. And whatever I earned on part-time jobs I pretty much kept to help defray the cost of my education. I guess in a sense this may have helped a little. Direct contributions toward any household expenses, though, I was not earning enough, I think, to do anything. But after I left—after I got out of high school—then wherever I was and was working, I would always send my mother money. I think this eased her plight somewhat, especially after I came to Hawai'i. When I came to Hawai'i my oldest sister was possibly about nine years old, and I was able to set aside an allotment for my mother (as) a direct payment to her. And she later says that this was quite helpful. And I think this was the period (when) she was able to have some sort of relief from the hard life that she had led. She raised two children during the [Great] Depression. And she walked to work two or three miles from Second Street to downtown Athens. Whether there

was snow (or) there was ice, she worked six days a week. So my mother had a hard life.

WN: She was working in the laundry?

EG: Yes.

WN: What did she do there?

EG: Worked on a presser machine. Very demanding work, hot in the summer. And during the winter months walking to and from work. And starting early in the morning and coming back late in the afternoon and the evening—just barely, just barely making it—very difficult time. Don't know what else to say about my mother. I think everyone has a special place for mothers as I have for mine (clears throat). Excuse me.

WN: How was your family affected by the depression? Or how was the town affected by the depression?

EG: I recall everything being very, very severe—very hard. Times were very tough.

WN: Were there layoffs and things?

EG: Now, remember we are looking at a youth's . . .

WN: Yeah. Right.

EG: I was a child. They were working for what? A dollar a day? My father was working for a dollar a day. My mother was probably working for a little less than that. The domestics may have had it. . . . You see, as I said before, a lot of the people in the neighborhood where I grew up were domestics, and part of the work agreement, if there was any, was a low salary but at least you ate food from the tables. If you were a cook, you had an opportunity. You were a housecleaner, a cook, and so very often the domestic did it all. You were able to eat. Don't know where most of the men were employed. The women, I know, were domestic. Some of the men in my neighborhood worked at the slaughterhouse. This was one area of employment. As I told you, the slaughterhouse was right across the river, quite close. It was rough. It was just a rough period of time for most of the people, I think—both groups, both races there. That's about all I can say about it.

WN: I guess as a child it's hard to. . . .

EG: It's hard to make an assessment of it.

WN: You were saying when you were going to East Athens Elementary School, you know, that the possibility of completing elementary and going on were pretty remote. Now, you did it.

EG: Remote. Yeah.

WN: Now, can you tell me why?

EG: My aunt may have encouraged me a bit, but I went to school I guess because I wanted to.

WN: Were you a good student?

EG: I was a good student. I was in the top five throughout my elementary school years and throughout my junior (high) school years—the top five. And usually these classes consisted of maybe forty to fifty students. We went to the fifth grade in elementary school, and I was always a reader—always liked to read. And I remember the fourth-grade teacher would sometimes call in me as a second grader to show the fourth graders how to read. They would give out pink slips or blue slips if you made A's or B's, and I got quite a bit of those.

I was hungry most of the time that I went to school. I remember being hungry and there was soup or some sort of food for students who qualified, and I'd most certainly qualified for some sort of food in school. We never would consider it. My parents—I know my mother would not have considered it. My aunt would not have considered me even taking it so there was no . . .

WN: Because it was . . .

EG: Ego, pride, pride. You didn't do that. Welfare was considered (degrading). You didn't accept welfare. So I grew up during these years quite hungry. As I said, I think the motivation must have been self-motivation. I could've dropped out and went to work. I did drop out when I first entered high school. I dropped out for two years. And I could've stayed out, but I think friends, or something like that, encouraged me to go back. But in elementary school, I just went to school because I guess I liked going to school.

WN: So you went on to intermediate, and once you went on to intermediate [i.e., junior high] you had a pretty good idea that you'd go on to high school?

EG: Yeah, I entered high school, (it was while I) was in high school (that) I dropped out. Funny thing about it. I (have) to be among the top wherever I am. I had been a good student all during elementary school. I entered junior high, and I think the first year I was in junior high I still was applying myself. And the second year I was in junior high, I didn't learn anything, I didn't apply. . . . And when I entered high school I was behind and I wasn't able to keep up with that top five that I'd been accustomed to. I became disenchanted so I quit and stayed out for two years and went to work in a butcher market for two years. And I think some friends of mine—high school friends—must have encouraged me to go back. It wasn't family members, it was some friends. So I went back to high school, and somehow or another I applied myself and then was able to move back into that position that I felt I always wanted to be. Maybe I was studying hard, or maybe I was with a different group. But from then on, (I) was again pretty much applying myself. There was some times when I goofed off in high school. But by and large I made some pretty good grades in high school.

WN: The name of your high school was Athens High and Industrial School.

EG: Athens High and Industrial School.

WN: Was it like a vocational-oriented school?

EG: They had a shop. I don't know why it started out that way. It must've started out that way for some certain amount of vocational training. Well, for the boys I know there was a carpenter

shop. And even now, some of the things that I learned then has been beneficial to me now. The girls had—there's a term for it—but they were learning cooking and all that sort of stuff. There's a term for it.

WN: Home ec.

EG: Home economics. Those were the only things that would possibly have made it an industrial school. (The) teachers, though, from the time that I started school (until) the time that I finished, took an interest. They took an interest in (the) students—personal interest. They had to because a lot of things that they taught, the kids weren't getting at home. And these were simple things that we might take for granted now, but etiquette and stuff like that were being taught in school. Certain manners were taught in school, and certain hygiene habits were being taught in school. I look at the problems that schools are having now and realize that this is one of the things that's missing. Maybe it's missing because the schools were definitely not as big. Athens High and Industrial School had a student body less than 400 and I think it was about 325, which is small. But those teachers had an opportunity to take a direct interest in the students. I think this is one of the faults that the schools have today—they're too big. They should be reduced in size. I got a lot out of the schools. I got a lot from the teachers. Maybe this is why I continued because there was something there that I wanted and I could get it in the schools.

WN: Were you involved in any kind of extracurricular stuff?

EG: Yes, I was quite active in glee club during high school, (an interest) I would carry over from my elementary school. I did Christmas plays and Christmas pageants when I was in elementary school and all during high school. I didn't participate too much in sports. And it surprises me because before I started going to high school I was [into] sandlot football, boxing and everything else. In my neighborhood we had the toughest team, football. Played softball until I got hit coming into home plate, so that ended softball career. Never was (laughs) very much into baseball. During the time I was in high school, I had to work, so any free time I had I was working for this dress shop. And it includes Saturdays also, so I didn't have too much time to play. Wanted to play football. Was a little too rough for basketball. So I . . .

WN: You were too rough for basketball?

EG: Yeah, I don't know. Football, I went out a couple of times and I was placed on end. And at that time ends played both [ways]. And I was fast. So the coach wanted me to come out as an end because defensively I was breaking up a lot of plays the first time I went out—I remember this. But they practiced in the afternoon after school was out, and when school was out I had to go to work so I couldn't keep up with it. Then I went out a couple of times to try to get on the basketball team and then I was fouling out (WN laughs).

WN: Taking after your father, eh?

EG: (Laughs) Anyway, I didn't make the cut for basketball.

WN: What was your curriculum like?

EG: Emphasis on math, English, history. Studied Negro history.

WN: Really?

EG: Mm hmm. I have a pretty good background in Negro history. I think the year that I entered high school, a French course but they discontinued that and, I think, replaced it with Negro history. So I studied Negro history for three years or so. Chemistry. I studied English, English literature, math. I didn't get to trigonometry. History—one of my favorite subjects.

WN: So Negro history and history were two separate?

EG: They were separate.

WN: I'm curious. What was covered in Negro history?

EG: More or less the background of some of the leaders of the slave revolution, stuff like that. Frederick Douglass and some of the major leaders—a lot of it I've forgotten, I'm sure. Booker T. Washington. The two classes were separated, but I think the principal taught them both, Negro history and American history. The Negro history class, the top five, as a reward of some kind, was taken to Tuskegee [Institute] for a trip. I saw Dr. Washington Carver in his lab. We visited his lab and met with him. I have a fairly basic grasp of Negro history from high school. Naturally over the years I've picked up quite a bit more. But primarily the basic came from high school study.

Oh, and also I studied shop—carpentry. It's benefitted me now. I didn't see any benefit in those days. I didn't think about being a carpenter or anything like that. But the fundamentals of carpentry were taught. The use of the tools, the reading of the tools. Not so much [reading] blueprints and stuff like that, but how to use the tools, how to use hand tools and some power tools. I don't think (it) was too interesting. I found that a lot of it benefitted me later on because I built a house and (used some of the knowledge) I must've picked up during those days.

WN: I would think that since a small portion, a small percentage of the kids going to elementary school went on to intermediate and to high school, would you say that it was more or less the intellectually, it was sort of like the upper echelon going on to high school, and you being among them?

EG: You mean scholastically speaking?

WN: Yeah.

EG: That's a possibility. There were two high schools in Athens—Black high schools. One was a public school, the other was private. I think all of your public schools throughout Athens sort of siphoned into that one high school. Other parts of the town weren't like Over-the-River. There were one or two other places that were depressed also, but in some other parts of the town of Athens, the people had a higher standard of living than we had, and I'm sure that these parents encouraged their children to go to school. This wasn't the case where I grew up. There may have been one or two families, the Turners may have been in the category, and also the Williams who lived on the same street. These are names that come to me. And I'm

sure that those families may have said, "Look, you will finish high school." But by and large most of us didn't fall in that category. And I'm talking about a lot of my friends. If they finished high school, it's pretty much on their own. And, I suppose, to answer your question, if you are not a good student, then chances are, unless someone sort of pushes you along or encourages you, you're not going to go because there's no reason to. You're not accomplishing anything.

WN: By the time you were in high school did you have any kind of goals or ideas of what you were going to do?

EG: I was going to be a professor. That was the one thing that looked like there was something. Schoolteachers and ministers were the ones that were the leaders in the Black community. They were the ones that had any sort of status in the community. And I suppose I was going to be a teacher of some kind. I remember talking to this woman. I used to work for her as a houseboy. She must've asked me the same question. I told her I was going to be a professor, and she often mentioned it afterwards. And I think she took it half jokingly as a humorous thing for me to say. I think I was working for her when I was about twelve years old. She asked me and I said that's what I was going to be. I don't know what was open for me. Later on when I was sixteen or so, I was working for this Jewish man, and at that time I think I wanted to go into the art field. We were decorating, doing his windows and things like that, and I used to assist him. And he encouraged me to leave Athens. He said, "Leave Athens." Jewish people were funny. You had two or three different stratas there, ethnically speaking. White Anglo-Saxon on top, then you had another strata there consists of Jews who were discriminated against. Catholics that were discriminated against. And there was some Italians there, but the Italians were not considered Anglo-Saxon or White. And then you had Blacks. And our position was naturally on the bottom of the totem pole. These others in between. But the Jewish people that I came in contact with were good people to my way of thinking. This man encouraged me to leave Athens. He said, "Look, you should get out of Athens, and go somewhere else." At that time, New York would've been the place to go. For some reason I guess he just felt that if I was going to accomplish anything, I wasn't going to do it in Athens. Athens was dead. Athens was endsville. It's different now. It's a total different thing now.

WN: So, Jewish people owned most of the businesses. Did Black people work for the Jewish people?

EG: As domestics.

WN: What about in their businesses?

EG: No. I did. They hired a lot of us. A lot of those businesses did have Black kids like me working in their stores and things. And we did errands, we cleaned up the shop. We assisted in different ways inside of the shop. But they did hire. Some of us did have those jobs.

WN: What about the laundry that your mom worked at? Who owned it?

EG: Whites owned it, and the Blacks were more or less doing most of the work with the exception of the front desk, I think. Restaurants, Blacks did the cooking. The waiters in the restaurants—White restaurants. . . . That's a good question. Since I never went into one, I

don't recall anymore. I think they were White.

WN: Were there Black-owned businesses?

EG: Very few. I know there was a preacher who lived on Third Street. He had a sort of neighborhood store. He was definitely one man in business—Black-owned. Downtown, yes, we had enough. Downtown Athens had a fountain. This was a fountain-drugstore sort of thing that was Black-owned. They had two or three restaurants. This is all on Hot Corner. Hot Corner was about a block long, and they had a theater—there was a theater there. There was one or two insurance firms. There was one or two funeral parlors, Black-owned. There may have been small stores, neighborhood stores, grocery stores, and things like this, Black-owned. There was some Black businesses there, come to think of it. I almost lied. If you went to a restaurant, it was Black-owned. We didn't do any dining out, you know, like people do now. The Morton Theater was Black-owned. There was one or two funeral parlors.

WN: What about institutional segregation? Was there, in terms of separate facilities and so forth in Athens?

EG: What sort of institutions?

WN: Restrooms, drinking fountains . . .

EG: Everything was segregated. The fountains were segregated. Restroom was Black and White. Bus stations, Black and White. Train stations, Black and White. Theaters, Black and White. Stores as such, you could enter, but if you wanted to buy something you couldn't try it on. Anytime you wanted to buy a hat you couldn't try it on. Shoes, I suppose, you could try on. But they were segregated. If you walked in a shoe store, the entrance was here, one section for Whites and the back section for Blacks. Stores, like department stores, the same thing prevailed to a degree.

WN: So separate entrances for stores, and restaurants . . .

EG: Not separate entrances—restaurants you came in the back or you came to a side window for a take-out. The stores weren't necessarily two entrances. I don't recall a Colored and White entrance to a store, let's say a department store. I'm trying to look at shoes and stuff like that now. If there was dressing rooms I'm sure they were separate, they would be segregated. It would be a segregated dressing room. Segregated shoe areas. Churches—segregated; they're segregated. Cemeteries—segregated. Funeral parlors—segregated. I've already mentioned theaters.

WN: When you say "segregated," you mean Blacks only go to certain theaters?

EG: They had a combination—they had both. They had some theaters that had both Black and White, but the Blacks always went to the balcony, and the Whites always stayed down in the mezzanine. Some theaters, Blacks did not enter at all. There were one or two theaters in town that Blacks didn't enter at all. Hotels—Blacks did not patronize under any circumstances. There were two or three major hotels there—Georgia Hotel, Holman Hotel. And I think Holman Hotel didn't even allow Black bellhops for a long time. There was one Chinese restaurant in town, and that was only patronized by Whites. There were hardly—very few

Oriental at all, I think. The ones that I'm familiar with possibly owned that restaurant—it was downtown. Most of your Black businesses were not downtown. They were in segregated areas. This was unique because this was a Chinese man, but he's right downtown Athens. And there's one or two Italian places right downtown Athens. The Jewish stores were downtown. As I said, Jews had most of the businesses. Of course, Jewish holidays, Athens almost closed up.

WN: Really?

EG: Yeah. It almost closed. The Jews were not participating too much in politics. I recall this incident I was telling you about—the University of Georgia. And the man I worked for was named Boley, and he and I would have conversations every once in a while. He was saying that the business people in town did not endorse what was happening as far as the University of Georgia being taken off the accredited list. I said, “Well, why didn't you people vote?” He said, well, somehow in so many words that they didn't get involved in politics. I suppose they voted, but to actively engage in politics, I think this was a White thing. I think this was a WASP sort of thing.

WN: Did Blacks get involved in politics?

EG: Not to my knowledge. I don't ever remember a Black politician back in those days doing anything. If there was one at all anywhere, he was a preacher. (There) was a guy who used to sell real estate. But he was bootlegging real estate, (WN laughs) he didn't have a license. Bootlegging for somebody else, I think. It was an interesting life. It wasn't a good life but it was an interesting life.

WN: Well, you went on intermediate school, then you graduated from high school. What year did you graduate from high school?

EG: Nineteen forty-two.

WN: Nineteen forty-two. And that's when the war started [December 7, 1941]. So what I want to do is to stop right here and I want to come back another time and we just pick up from right there. And I think a good way to leave it was when you said someone told you that you should get out of Athens.

EG: I suppose that was the time.

WN: Okay, then why don't we stop here then.

EG: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 22-73-2-93 and 22-74-2-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ernest L. Golden (EG)

April 28, 1993

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Ernest Golden on April 28, 1993, and we're at his office in the airport industrial area in Honolulu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, you know, we ended last interview right about the time you were graduating from high school. Okay, so you finished high school. Then what happened?

EG: I left Athens. Finished high school. I think we had our commencement exercises around June 11, [1942]. June the fifteenth a very close friend of mine and I left Athens and went to Atlantic City. My friend had been to Atlantic City the year before so he knew what summer jobs were available, and there was a demand for workers—restaurant workers. So we went to Atlantic City and . . .

WN: This is New Jersey?

EG: New Jersey, yeah. Got jobs right away. Worked in a restaurant as, I think I started as kitchen helper—dishwasher—something like that. We had little or no money when I left Athens.

WN: How did you feel about leaving?

EG: It felt good (laughs).

WN: What about your parents?

EG: I suppose my mother thought maybe I was possibly. . . . I was living with my aunt at the time. I don't recall any great reservations they had about it, I just turned nineteen. And I guess I was reliable and it was only for about three months, just for the summer. I don't recall any great reservations on any part on my parents or my aunt as far as my leaving. And this friend of mine, we're very close friends—he was not that much older than I, he was like an older brother. So as long as the two of us were together I think there was a certain amount of security in that. And we stayed in Atlantic City until from, oh, I suppose, until September, Labor Day. And then we left and came back to Athens and stayed in Athens a short time. And then went to New Orleans, [Louisiana].

WN: Why did you—well, I can see Atlantic City because of your good friend, but why New

Orleans?

EG: I haven't the slightest idea (WN laughs). Just another place to go.

WN: I thought maybe you'd want to get out of the South, though.

EG: Well, I don't know why we went to New Orleans. New Orleans was just one of those accidents. At that time we would take a bus where we were going. And we'd get bus fare and we'd go. If someplace interested us, we'd go there. When I say "we" it was my high school buddy. Out of a class of about fifty students, give or take a few, there were thirteen guys, and most of us were quite close, running buddies. And of those, my closest buddy was Milton Jordan. He and I are still in touch with each other. He was school president, and I was vice president. He and I would decide to go somewhere and we'd go. And New Orleans was just one of those places where (we) went. We went for the novelty of it. We stayed there two weeks.

This all leads up to my being in Hawai'i actually. We were on the bus and then somehow or another we saw an ad, I think, in *Time* magazine offering jobs in Bermuda. And we went to the post office to sign up for (the) job, but those jobs were closed. (It was) civil service work. But they offered something in Pearl Harbor. So we signed up for Pearl Harbor and went back to Athens and stayed there a few days, and then decided to go to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This was all in October. Now remember, we started May, spent three months in Atlantic City, and then went to New Orleans. So we arrived in Philadelphia in October.

WN: [Nineteen] forty-three?

EG: Forty-two.

WN: Forty-two.

EG: Forty-two. October the twentieth. I know the date. Some of these dates stick with me. And went to work at a restaurant. We'd always do that because two things would happen. One, you'd get a job. (And) two, when you went to work in a restaurant, you'd eat. We would bus dishes. We stayed there until December the nineteenth. And the papers that we had signed to go to Pearl Harbor came through December 19. His paper came to the address (in Philadelphia) and we went back to Athens and found mine. They went to my address at home, in Athens. And then we came to California. For the first time since high school days we split up, I guess. His orders directed him to go to one route and mine went another, and we were traveling by rail—first-class accommodations. I didn't have any money. The little money I had, I lost. Somebody took it from me. I had about fifteen dollars. Arrived in California and went to work at (one) of the navy yards there, waiting for our orders to (go) to Pearl Harbor.

I don't recall when we got on the boat, (it was a) troop transport out of California. I don't know what dock we left from, but I do recall that we were on (the) boat, I think—I want to say thirteen days. Three of the days seem to have been waiting to get with a convoy. I think we were sailing something like eleven days because we were zig zagging and all that sort of stuff. Looks like it took us eleven days to get over here. And I know that two or three of those days I was seasick. Wow. And arrived here February 1, 1943.

WN: Okay, let me back up a little bit. You were talking about seeing something in the newspaper [magazine]. Do you remember what it said or how it attracted you?

EG: You mean the civil service jobs?

WN: Mm hmm.

EG: Nothing spectacular or anything. One of the things was the hourly wage. It said seventy-two cents an hour. That was the key word, that was the selling point.

WN: How much were you making as a busboy?

EG: Oh, god. I don't know. Possibly a dollar a day or something like that, plus whatever tips. It wasn't very much. I was head busboy at one time, and I wasn't making much money. The amount of money I was making in those days was so little that seventy-two cents an hour was a very, very attractive hourly rate. We're talking. . . . That comes to less than eight dollars a day, right?

WN: Mm hmm [yes].

EG: Eight-hour day. For forty-hour work week, you're talking less than forty dollars a week. But forty dollars a week was an impressive amount of income for us to consider. I'll tell you one thing, our attitude at that time was for seventy-two cents an hour. We don't care where, we'll go.

WN: Was Bermuda offering the same amount?

EG: I think Bermuda was offering the same amount, but the jobs there were closed. But we didn't know anything about Pearl Harbor.

WN: What did you know . . .

EG: We didn't know anything about Pearl Harbor. The morning of December 7, [1941], by nine o'clock in the morning, for some reason I was listening to the radio, and they said the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor was meaningless to me. I remember Roosevelt coming on (the radio) sometime during the day stating that the hand that held a dagger stabbed it into the back of its neighbor or something like that. Now whether I heard (this) in those days or whether I heard it later on, I don't know, but seemingly it sticks with me. But Pearl Harbor itself had no meaning whatsoever geographically speaking in its relationship with the United States. None. I'd seen the movies of the South Pacific and maybe related it with the South Pacific, but otherwise nothing. So when we saw this wage rate I think one of us made the statement that for seventy-two cents an hour we would go to hell and back (WN laughs).

WN: What about your military status?

EG: I had been 1-A, and that's an interesting thing because there was no call for draft. I think the early part of '43 is when the mandatory draft would've been, when the draft would've affected me. At that time, I suppose, I would've looked forward to being drafted. You see, on the nineteenth of December, I had gone down to the local draft board in Philadelphia and

tried to join the [U.S.] Air Force. This was December 19, 1942. They told me that I would be drafted in January, anyway, so why did I want to volunteer? But I wanted the air force.

WN: Why?

EG: Air force just seemed to be something more glamorous than anything else that I could think of. I don't know if I was going to try to fly because in those days the air force was far removed as far as Blacks were concerned. And I had the feeling that I was denied volunteering because it was the air force. And it was when I got back to the apartment that Milton Jordan said that his papers to go to Pearl Harbor had arrived, so we felt then that mine had also. So I was going to try to volunteer for the service at that time because I guess we had just about run out of places to go, although we had signed up to come to Pearl Harbor there was no guarantee that the (application) had been (approved). So I was going to take the next move and that was join the service. So my draft status when I came to Pearl Harbor was, throughout the war, 1-A.

WN: Milton Jordan was the same thing?

EG: Milton married his high school sweetheart, high school girlfriend. He and I came here together. I often kid him when I see him now. Lillian—she was Lillian Thomas at the time—they were corresponding, they were very much attached. He left [Hawai'i] after nine months. And once you left here, you went directly (into) the service, especially if you were physically fit as we were. And he went back and I think he got married. I don't know whether he got married before he went in the [U.S.] Navy or afterwards, but they got married then. And they're still married.

WN: Wow.

EG: The only two of all the classmates to have married classmates. We're all very friendly. I talked with him a few days ago. But no, he left after nine months.

WN: Besides you and Milton, were there others from that area—from your area—doing that, going to Pearl Harbor?

EG: No. After I arrived here, come to find out there were quite a few from Atlanta, Georgia. I would say a large number of Blacks [working at Pearl Harbor] were from Atlanta, Georgia.

WN: I know it wasn't the case of you, but I was just wondering if going civil service, let's say Pearl Harbor, enabled somebody to get out of the draft, to be able to earn some money in civilian work rather than risking (laughs) going into battle.

EG: I don't know if going to war was the greater incentive to come to Pearl Harbor than to get out of the South. I think going to war would've been more attractive than staying in the South. I know Milton or I, neither one, thought anything about, hey look, we're going to be drafted. Our motivation was leaving the South. And I think that being drafted would have served that purpose almost as well as coming to Pearl Harbor. I would've gone to either one. It didn't matter to me. However, once you were here, you got six months deferment if you just stayed on the job and you were a dependable worker, that's about all. There may have been some who left. I don't think many Southerners—Blacks that came here—came to dodge the draft.

From other parts of the country some of those people may have been a little more sophisticated in their thinking as far as going to war and not going to war, but we were not. Looking back, no. Out of all the years and all the people that I've known here in Hawai'i, war workers, guys who came over that were here when I came in and those who came after (me), the conversation never came up that, hey, listen, we came over here to get away from the war. I think we came over here to get away from the South.

WN: Interesting.

EG: This just dawned on me as you asked your question. As I said, and I'm being repetitious, if my only options were staying in Athens (or) going to war, I would've gone to war. I would have joined the service.

WN: Is this a common reaction, do you think, or is that more . . .

EG: I believe in those days it was a common reaction, yes. War couldn't have been (any) worst than what we had. The only thing you could do in a war is get killed. You could get killed in Athens if you didn't act right. So that was no reason to stay in Athens. It's an interesting thought to me. I don't quite understand it now. But I wouldn't have hesitated to volunteer to go in the army or navy or what have you.

WN: So you said you knew nothing about Pearl Harbor. What was going through your mind before you came to Hawai'i as to, you know, you said you saw [movies about the] South Pacific. What else? What did you expect?

EG: I really don't know. I had no idea where I was going, what I was getting into.

WN: But you did know or think that it was an improvement from Athens?

EG: It had to be. It couldn't have been any worst.

WN: Did you hear anything about the multiracial aspect of Hawai'i?

EG: No, nothing at all. I didn't have any idea what Hawai'i was like. And I tell you what I didn't do. I didn't associate Pearl Harbor with Hawai'i. I didn't associate the two. I was going to Pearl Harbor—I wasn't going to Hawai'i. I don't know where I thought Pearl Harbor was. Geographically speaking, I should have known. In other words, when it was decided that we were going to go to Pearl Harbor, we didn't say, "Hey, we're going to Hawai'i!" We were going to Pearl Harbor. Hawai'i happened to be, I suppose, a side benefit (laughs). It was a goodie that we had (not counted on). I guess if we had known I would have possibly been a little more eager to come. As I said, the money factor was the motivating, the driving force behind that.

WN: Did you have any idea as to how long you'd stay?

EG: Eighteen months.

WN: Oh, that's what it was for?

EG: Eighteen months, and I think I came with the intention of staying the eighteen months because if you stayed eighteen months then you fulfilled your contract. Then transportation would be paid for you (back) to your hometown. Milton, I think, had to pay his way back because he left before his contract was completed. I don't even know when I decided to stay and live in Hawai'i. It may have been after I got married (in 1950). I think (for) the first few years the idea was, this was a temporary thing. I think I fell in love with Hawai'i as we were sailing into the harbor.

WN: Tell me about that.

EG: We'd been on the ship for eleven days. My first two or three days were very bad from seasickness. I forgot the name of the ship we were on, but I recall the ship was full of people, full of guys.

WN: Civilians or . . .

EG: Both civilians and military people. It was a troop transport. But you're crossing what we call the high seas, and the high seas has a blue, indigo blue, not very attractive to me. And it was cold and I don't adapt to cold weather very well. But I think about three days before we arrived here, the weather changed and became warmer. This was in January. When I left San Fran—I have never been so cold as I was in San Francisco. I don't think I really got warm until about two or three days out of Pearl Harbor. And then as we were sailing into Pearl Harbor, the colors of the water changed. I think this was the first thing that impressed me. (No), the second thing. The first thing was the warm climate. The second thing was the colors of the ocean. Beautiful greens, various colors of greens and blues combined. This impressed me. At that time we still weren't in Hawai'i as far as I was concerned because we just pulled into Pearl Harbor. Honolulu wasn't on my mind in those days because I didn't know where Honolulu was either. But the first impression of Pearl Harbor, though, itself, was very negative. You see, I didn't work at Pearl Harbor when I [first] came. I worked in the harbor, but that was at Ford Island. And I was glad I was at Ford Island because when I first saw Pearl Harbor, Pearl Harbor was a mess. Ships clutter, wartime clutter.

WN: You're talking about clutter from the attack or just . . .

EG: Clutter from equipment and everything. I mean it was a place I didn't want to work. In other words, we were laborers, and I couldn't see working (in) some of the greasy, oily areas that I saw. And I don't know how I got what I wanted, and that was not to work at Pearl Harbor. They assigned me to Ford Island. And you had to take the ferry over. That was the only negative part about that because it took you all day to get there (WN laughs). You know, literally speaking. You had to spend, what, forty-five minutes on (the) ferry. That's quite a bit of time crossing over. Maybe it was less than that. But we spent a lot of time waiting for the ferry and getting on the ferry and crossing on the ferry. But Ford Island itself was not the clutter—that was Pearl Harbor proper.

WN: So what did you do at Ford Island?

EG: Laborer from the start. We cut grass, cleaned up around the buildings. Then later on I was working (in) the tool room, worked in that most of the time. Not most of the time. For a while. Then I transferred from there to the boiler plant. I had one or two other jobs in

between. I was civil service here for about, from 1943 to about 1946.

WN: How did they evaluate you in terms of what your abilities were? I mean, did they make an attempt to match your abilities with a certain job?

EG: That may have. But I don't recall having any test or anything that would, you know, see if I was suited for any particular work. I think you had the opportunity to try to apply for different positions. I think the opportunity was there for you to try to promote, you know, to better yourself. But, I don't recall exactly what they were. I don't recall.

WN: Were there those that were better skilled and got better jobs and better pay?

EG: Oh yes, yes. I would say that most of us were possibly just laborers.

WN: And you were with a team or a group?

EG: Yeah, I was with a group, and I think this was my first exposure to working with some local kids about my same age. And a good cross section of Hawaiian people. There were some Chinese, some Portuguese, some Filipinos. Most of us were in our teens. But then there were some older Filipino people there that was doing the same work and we worked with them also. That seems to be parts of the team. They had what they called lead men, and we would be assigned to a lead man, and he'd have certain responsibilities. He'd take a team or a crew out and that crew would partially consist of the makeup that I explained to you. And usually there was some Filipino people in the group. But I remember making friends at that time with, oh, about four or five kids, teenagers, about my same age. One part-Hawaiian—Hawaiian and something. I don't know what. . . . There was Chinese-Hawaiian. Portuguese kid. Chinese guy.

WN: And there were also Whites in the group, too, from the Mainland?

EG: There may have been. I think there was one or two Whites in that group that was doing the same thing. When we first came here you'd report for duty in the morning and then you'd be given some assignment. Sometimes you worked in the carpenter shop, sometimes you'd work on the outside crew doing outside work. This is how it was set up, I think, now that I look back. I think one or two of the lead men were Hawaiian, come to think of it.

WN: "Lead men" meaning bosses or . . .

EG: Yeah, they'd be sort of supervisors, supervisors of a crew, and I don't know how many people they'd have on a crew. I made quite a few friends in those days. There was I think one or two Puerto Ricans. No, that was later.

WN: So the majority of your group was local?

EG: Yeah.

WN: Some Whites and some Blacks?

EG: Yeah, I think there was one or two or three Blacks. They may have been older than I. But I

think they were also working as laborers and we worked together with these various assignments. There were some Blacks and Whites from the Mainland on this thing. But, I think, by and large, most of them were local people.

WN: And how was that? Any problems or . . .

EG: No, I don't recall any problems in those days. We got along quite well. We got along very well. I made some friendships that I treasure until today although I haven't seen a lot of these people in many, many years. And a funny thing about it, I think now, in contrast, and this was one of the things, I think, that endeared me to Hawai'i, endeared Hawai'i to me, whichever way you want to put it, was that the friendships that I made would have been denied me in Athens and in Georgia and in the South. I think this was a good thing. That was a good cross section. I made some good friends in those days. Over the years we've lost touch. I'm sure a lot of them went back to the Mainland. They've been gone quite a few years. But it gave me an opportunity to meet other people of different racial backgrounds. It was a good cross section, too. A very good cross section. Naturally, when you're from the South there was this White and Black thing, and there was always somehow or another you knew or you felt, and I'm not going to say this well, the friendship wasn't on equal basis, the relationship wasn't on equal basis. And here we were meeting on equal terms. It was just a pure, open friendship. And I think it was something that I needed. It was something that I had been looking for. I think it was something that I wanted, that sort of relationship with people. To be able to select and choose my friends.

WN: There's less regard for class here.

EG: There's less regard for---I don't know about class. You see, because I had just come from an environment where color was the only thing. Color was what determined whether there was going to be a friendship. If you were White and I was Black, then I knew that there was going to be limits to our friendship. So it didn't matter whatever class (there) was. Regardless I could've been the most educated, intelligent person and you were White and you were the least that you would still be better than I. Okay? And so here in Hawai'i the emphasis wasn't on color, although we were all aware of it. And I think as teenagers we joked about it.

WN: Did you know so-and-so was part-Hawaiian, so-and-so was Filipino at that time? Or are you looking at that in retrospect?

WN: I knew it at that time. Very early, I think, when we came here, of all the Orientals we started making distinctions between, and there were discussions about it. And the shape of the eye and that sort of thing were supposed to determine the difference between Chinese and Japanese. I don't recall Japanese being at Pearl Harbor, being at Ford Island in those days, there may have been some. So I think primarily I was dealing with the Chinese. I think I had some dealing with Korean, based on the name. Now, Chu was working in the office there and I think Chu could've been Chinese, but now I imagine he was Korean. I'm not certain. But this fine distinction now comes from years of being in Hawai'i. At that time, I don't think the fine distinction was there. The Filipinos were older people. They were more mature; they were older men who we were working with. Most of them smoked Tuscany. Most of them, I think, just came off the farm [i.e., sugar plantations]. And most of them spoke Filipino. None of us, including the local kids, knew what the heck they were talking about. Albert was

Portuguese, we knew that. There was a kid named Lee that I got to know, that's his last name. He was Chinese-Hawaiian. Tripp was part-Hawaiian. Tripp could have had some Afro-American blood. No one even mentioned it in those days, but Tripp did have. These were some of the kids that were quite close, that I got to know quite well. One Chinese kid. And all of us, within let's say a year or so, (were) about the same age. And we spent our lunchtime together, and it was from choice. We just did it because we wanted to be together. It was interesting. I was interesting to them because I don't think they had an opportunity to associate with Blacks. And they were interesting to me because I never had an opportunity to associate with them. There was some *Haole* kid there that I don't remember his name, but he was about the same age from Tennessee—somewhere in the hills of Tennessee. A very, very likable guy. Very likable. He was about the same age. And I think that it was a positive experience for him.

WN: Did you meet anybody like that *Haole* guy from Tennessee in Athens? Did you know anybody on that kind of basis? Those kind of fellows?

EG Yeah, but it was altogether different. It was a different thing. It's a funny thing about that society there. I worked as a houseboy for a family. And I was about twelve years old. At that age we played with the neighborhood kids which were all White. We just played together. This was pre-high school days. But once these kids reached high school, those relationships were severed, were cut rather sharply, too. They just stopped. And then you had to start calling them "Mister." I don't know how this came about. But they had some sort of code there that established that division. So if I had been in Athens I could not have continued that friendship that had been established earlier. Because I recall a young man or teenager who was a brother of the lady I was working for, and he and I and my uncle played together. But this relationship was severed after he reached high school. He then became the master. It was no longer friendship. He could be condescending, and he knew then that he could no longer play with us. So that sort of thing [i.e., making friends with Whites in adulthood] could not happen back there, not where I came from. It could not have happened. It happens now, I imagine, without anyone thinking about it too much.

But Hawai'i was different. Hawai'i had something. I used to discuss this with friends of mine, and I suppose I've come up with my own theories about Hawai'i. And at that time, though, what I looked at was I came from an area, I came from an environment or society where discrimination and segregation were the law of the land. I coined (the) phrase, "organized discrimination-segregation." And even if there was segregation and discrimination and prejudices in Hawai'i, it wasn't, to my way of thinking, organized. That was different. It wasn't the law of the land if anyone did it. They did it because it was a personal thing with them. But where I came from the law said that this was right and proper. And I could live with any society that did not make this the law of the land, although I lived in a segregated area when I came here. We lived in CHA-3. CHA-3 was segregated.

WN: Okay, let me turn the tape over and we can talk about CHA-3, okay?

EG: Okay.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, you were just about ready to start talking about CHA-3. Why don't you tell me first what CHA-3 stands for.

EG: Civilian housing area three. It's under [the U.S.] Navy. Under the navy, for civilians. I don't know what to say about CHA-3. We were all assigned to units there. They were four-unit buildings, and all of the civil service workers—Blacks on 18th and 19th Street. And it's back of where Hawaiian Airlines is now.

WN: Hawaiian Airlines . . .

EG: Hawaiian Airlines building, new building now that they're in.

WN: The new terminal?

EG: Not the new one. They're building another one now, you know.

WN: Oh, they are?

EG: So the new building, the multi-story building is a new one. But the existing building Hawaiian Airlines is in now, CHA-3 was right back of there. Just between Nimitz [Highway] here and Hickam Field. So it was bordered on, what they call Luke Field? No, Luke Field is on Ford Island. It was bordering on Hickam Field, just in back of Hawaiian Airlines. Like I said, we were on 18th and 19th Street.

WN: This was considered the [U.S.] Navy area. You weren't in the Hickam area?

EG: No, Hickam was separate. This was outside of Hickam Field gate, about a half mile outside of Hickam Field. It had a mess hall, CHA-3 banquet hall. And that was sort of an entertainment center where you got the movies and you had whatever social activities seem to be there. There was a boxing arena attached to the commissary, I think. There was a beer garden where you got hot beer.

WN: Hot beer?

EG: Yeah, I don't recall any refrigeration around in those days (WN laughs). Not hot, hot beer—not stolen hot beer. This is warm beer.

WN: Uh huh. They didn't even give you cold beer?

EG: (At) CHA-3, I don't think they even had cold beer. There was so many things that we didn't have back in those days that you would say how did you get along without it? I wasn't a drinker, anyway, in those days. I didn't drink anything hardly. But I remember there was a beer garden there. I recall a lot of mud. And remember, I guess a lot of these things that I'm trying to remember may have been short-lived. But my first impression of CHA-3 was wall-to-wall men, just a whole lot of men all striving to go somewhere and going nowhere. A lot of mud. Looked like money was plentiful. No women. You got from one place to another on what was called a "leaping lena." Ever heard of "leaping lena"? It was transportation---this

was a trailer hitched to a tractor, I think, sort of open. It went around the whole area. And this was our transportation from one part of the area to another. But it was, I suppose, the speed of a person walking, so you just leap on and leap off whenever you got to where you want to go.

WN: How many units do you think there were total for CHA-3?

EG: Wow, that's a good question. You had Main Street. I have to start. . . . Main Street, and between Main Street and 19th Street must have been fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. . . . And each one of these streets were possibly couple of blocks long, maybe a little more. And there may have been two to three buildings per block. That gives you an indication.

WN: How many units do you think were in a building?

EG: Usually four.

WN: Only four units?

EG: I think there were four units to a building.

WN: And this is one story?

EG: Two of the units, I think, had up and down and two of the units, I think, were just single level. But they were like one- or two-bedroom apartments, I think. You know the [public housing] on King Street?

WN: Yeah.

EG: Right across from Farrington [High School]? Designed something like that.

WN: I see.

EG: It was something on that order with the two units on the end being single story and, I think, the two units in the center being two story. I don't know how many baths were in the place, in each unit. But you would have at least two people per room, if I'm correct. In other words you had a roommate—assigned roommate. I don't know how they made the assignments. And I think all of you shared the same bath.

WN: How many of you shared the same bath? How many were in one . . .

EG: I would say at least four people per unit. It wasn't a bad accommodation as such for single people. Later they built dormitories for all the bachelors. All of what I'm saying existed for about a period of three years.

WN: Was it brand-new when you moved in?

EG: Yeah, pretty much new. They weren't old buildings. They were fairly new. Now remember this was a segregated area. There was some married couples in that area, also. There were very few Black women here in those days. Very, very few. This was one of the things that

was noticeable, the lack of any sort of feminine companionship and one of the things that bothered me. I dated quite extensively when I was in high school. All through high school I had no problems with girlfriends. And then all of a sudden to come over here and not have any girlfriends at all was something that didn't set very well.

WN: Did you have a steady girlfriend at all over there in Georgia or anywhere?

EG: I had more than one girlfriend at that time. It's funny in contrast. Nowadays, the emphasis is on some sort of a relationship, whatever they call it. Seemingly in those days it was the thing to date more than one person, especially us guys. There was a group of guys that we ran around with. We were running amok as far as the girls were concerned. Here's thirteen guys in a class of something like fifty-four students, and you could see how selective we could be and what a choice place to be. And we were in a choice position. So we had all the girls that we wanted. We had special girls but didn't---a special girlfriend we'd always have. Other girls we dated. So all of a sudden I'm in that environment and I come over here and I don't have any dates at all. It was quite a letdown. That was one of the things that bothered me here. But then it wasn't too long before we somehow or another solved that problem. Ten of us got together and formed an organization just to give parties. We called ourselves the "Ten Bachelors." And we gave some pretty first-class parties. We would rent a hall and each one of us was entitled to invite x-number of people. And through this we got some social life. And since we did it well we were quite popular. This was in, I suppose, after the war was over. When are we talking? Nineteen forty-six, thereabouts. But we resolved that problem of not having any dates because we would give parties and our parties were sought after. Whenever we did give a party everybody would want to get invited to them. So we sort of solved the problem of not having any dates.

WN: So what, you had live bands and things like that?

EG: We did have. Yeah. Made some lasting friends though that. I don't know if you---there's a Harold Lewis.

WN: Yeah, Aku.

EG: No, not Aku.

WN: Oh.

EG: (This is) a local Harold Lewis. Harold Lewis had a band. I think he later became a liquor (commissioner). He was a bandleader at that time. And he was a typical bandleader in those days that stood up in front of a band and used a baton and that sort of thing. Very, very fine person. We hired his band one time. We'd hire some navy bands every once in a while. We would hire top bands and give big parties. I'm sure that most of those parties were just invitational. We would defray the cost, I'm sure, because each one of us had to ante up so much money, do a lot of work and decorate the halls and come up with the food and the drinks and stuff like that. The highlight was when Nat King Cole came here the first time. We hosted him. We hosted him at Lau Yee Chai. This was big stuff. I've got some pictures from that now.

WN: "Hosting" meaning . . .

EG: Well, we gave a reception for him. I think he played one or two nights at McKinley [High School auditorium]. I don't know when he first arrived whether we gave him a reception or when he was leaving. But there was a Ralph Yempuku. Ralph Yempuku used to be promoter here. And this is when I first met Ralph. We became friends after that. He and his brother. But I didn't know the brothers as well as I knew Ralph. And I think they were---were they promoting King Cole? Lau Yee Chai was first-class.

WN: It sure was.

EG: Beautiful restaurant. So we invited lot of select friends and stuff like that. Impressive.

WN: This was during the war?

EG: Must've been after the war because during the time that I was with the "Ten Bachelors" I'd left the navy yard, I think, by this time. I'd stopped working civil service. There's an overlap here because I stopped working civil service. A lot of this (was) during the time I was attending art school because I was doing a lot of the art work for this thing. So it was an overlap there. Part of the time I was still with civil service and other time I'd quit and started . . .

WN: You quit civil service in '46?

EG: About '46, sometime around there. But the war was over I'm sure.

WN: So these parties that the "Ten Bachelors" put on, who came?

EG: We tried to invite as many single girls as we could.

WN: Local?

EG: Some, yeah. There were hardly (any) Black girls here. They had some married families here. They were all invited, usually those who were friends of ours. Because each one of us would have ten to twenty invitations that we could just give to our friends. And if we did somehow or another have some local girlfriends, then we would invite those. A lot of guys who had come here and by this time (had) left civil service or left the service for some reason or another and had moved Downtown, were a little bit more into the local scene as far as the girls were concerned than we were. They were naturally invited so there was, I suppose, some of the time some of the call girls and stuff like that, but. . . . There was feminine companionship there, something that we didn't have. But it was all done first-class. Beautifully decorated. Good entertainment. It served its purpose.

WN: Were there any ground rules from higher-ups, you know, as far as what kind of parties you can have or who you can date, things like that?

EG: None that I recall. I don't know if the curfew was still on as to how long these parties could go into the evenings, but I don't recall anyone giving any restrictions or limitations. CHA-3 could be off-limits if you weren't careful. This was the beginning of some of the pimps that got real strongholds in Honolulu later. And some of these guys could have been considered restricted guest, I suppose, if someone had decided they want to do something. But by and

large, I don't recall any restrictions. We were given pretty much carte blanche because the type of affairs we were giving were all done with good taste.

WN: Were military personnel invited also?

EG: We probably did have some military. I don't think we made a fine distinction. We must've had friends from both civilian and military.

WN: Did you come into contact lot with military personnel?

EG: Some of my friends were military during those years. Another good friend of mine who was in the navy at the time after Milton Jordan went back, this guy and I became very good friends. A guy named Cunningham, Johnny Cunningham. He was a civilian here and then somehow or another went into the navy or was drafted during the time he was here. And he used to come off the base and then get in civilian clothes and we'd all go Downtown. He'd borrow my clothes, and we'd go Downtown as civilians. If he got picked up I'm sure he would've gotten some sort of penalty of some kind. And I would go on the base and put on a navy uniform, and go into the movies and the mess halls, do all these sorts of things. We were nuts.

WN: I would imagine, though, the restrictions being imposed upon someone who's in the military was a lot harsher or stricter than people like you.

EG: Not much, not much, I don't think. We were still . . .

WN: There weren't much difference?

EG: I don't think that much different. I think there's a difference in the clothing you wore. I didn't see that much difference. For a while there was a curfew so you had to be in the barracks or in your dormitory, wherever you were, by ten o'clock. And I think they [military personnel] had the same sort of thing. I didn't see any big distinction. We made more money. I think that was the biggie, we made more money than they did. For a long time, sailors or soldiers hardly made any money at all, you know. They had access to some of the foods and stuff that we didn't have because they ate better than we did. They had better booze than we had because there was rationing. There was gasoline rationing. There was rationing on whiskey. There was rationing of cigarettes. But the guys in the military, whenever they had an opportunity, they made friends with some of the civilians because I guess that sort of gave them a taste of getting away from the military. So whenever they could they made friends with us. But they had some of the things that we needed and we had some of the things, I guess, they wanted. Because I recall with our ration cards, we could only get whiskey. We could get Five Islands gin and Ninety-nine. Those were the two local brews. And they were some bad whiskey. But guys would come in from the military and we would buy theirs, you know. And they really didn't want it, so we could buy whatever. I guess some of the time it was some of the booze that we were using for our parties. We could get military connections.

WN: The military had less pay but they had a lot more perks [i.e., perquisites].

EG: They had a lot more perks than we had. They had the perks that we really wanted. But looks as if we were both pretty much in the same boat. We worked in the same place. At Ford

Island, military had it better than we did, I guess. The guys that I knew at Ford Island—one works for me right now. I met him a long time ago. He was a chief at that time—chief of the mess hall. And Smitty was in the navy long before I came to Hawai'i. But he was in charge of one of the mess halls then, and I knew that he had it good. He had a good life.

WN: You said the food was different between the military and you guys. How? What kind of difference?

EG: Well, heck, we had powdered eggs (WN laughs). We had typical mess hall type food. These [military] guys that I was friends with were working for officers and they had officers' mess and officers' quarters. At Ford Island, my friends that I got to know in the navy worked in officers' clubs and consequently they had the quality foods, the very best of everything. I know that a lot of the guys, when I transferred from labor and I went to the boiler plant, and we'd have to go around the island—Ford Island—to service equipment and check on the units and things like that, and some of my guys who worked at the boiler plants had a regular thing with the chiefs in the officers' quarters because they had big spreads. I mean they had good food. And these guys would always go down just about lunchtime. If they were in with the chief, the chief gave them whatever food they wanted.

WN: These were civilians?

EG: Yeah. Civilians worked with me. But these old-timers knew how to get around the chiefs, and everything like that and they ate well. And it was a long time before I even got on to this. But no, they had it quite—they had the perks, as you said.

WN: What about the enlisted men? Did they eat good, too?

EG: I think the enlisted men probably ate about like we did (WN laughs). It was just about the same fare we had. During the time I was masquerading as a sailor (WN laughs), you know, I would spend weekends on the base. I don't know what would've happened. I suppose they would have put me in the brig or something if they caught me. But a couple of my buddies would come off, and when they came off, like I said, we'd go Downtown in my clothes, they borrowed my clothes, and I'd put their clothes on when I went on the base.

WN: Was that easy to do?

EG: There was no problem.

WN: What about ID or anything?

EG: I had to have ID anyway. Because I think everyone in those days had to have some form of identification to get on the base. They had these little things that were made, these guys were making them for your badge. So I think this sort of got you on the base anyway. First of all, I was working on the base so there was no big thing getting on the base. I just decided, you supposed to leave after the day's work was over but maybe I didn't leave. I just, you know, stayed on. It was something a teenager would do.

WN: (Laughs) What advantages were there to be on base?

EG: Okay, you had base theaters. You had all the base activities that we didn't have over at CHA-3. And you were asking about the food, I think the enlisted men's food must've been better than ours. Well, you're with your buddies and that was about it. A diversion. It seems simple now, but back in those days it was . . .

WN: You were a teenager.

EG: Yeah, it was different. It was something to do.

WN: I'm wondering, the civilians and the military personnel, okay, Blacks, was there an image difference socially, for example, having that uniform on, you know, having a certain social status here in Hawai'i as opposed to somebody like you who didn't have that uniform? You were here for a different purpose. Did you feel that at all?

EG: No, I don't think so, I don't think so. I think that a Black man was a Black man back in those days, and whether he was civil service or military I don't think there was a distinction. We did have to overcome some of the propaganda that was put down about us. We know that. I think most of the social life in those days, was centered around the lack of feminine companionship. Those who came before us, and the Blacks were not the first—the Whites came over here first—and I think that most of us, both Black and White, the majority of us were from the South. Now, why this was the case and why I happen to feel that way, I don't know. Maybe it was because most of the friction that existed to me at that time seemingly was between these two groups, okay? And I was one of that group. So the other group, I can only surmise based on being more visible in a negative way, were Southern Whites, and Southern Whites were here before we were. And Southern Whites, to protect whatever little feminine interest that was here, did whatever they could to make sure that we didn't get it, that we didn't get close to it. To give you an example, you get on a bus. You go in a theater, and if there was a women there and you sit down next to her, she was going to move. You got on a bus and you sit down next to her, she was going to move. She did not sit down next to you, and there was no fine distinction whether you had on a uniform or not. It's just that you were Black, and she wasn't going to sit next to you. This went on for quite a while. The men were friendly. The local people I came into contact with, males, were friendly to me. The women, I wasn't exposed to them to any great degree until after we started having those social affairs. And then we were exposed to some local girls. I think by this time, though, some of the brainwashing had been dispelled. I think that some of the lies that have been told, they, being intelligent people, had decided, wait a minute, what we've been told doesn't necessarily fit.

WN: What had they been told?

EG: Well, first of all, they were told that if (they had a baby by a Black man), it was going to be (a) monkey. This was one of the things. And I suppose the whole thing had to be tied up with a sexual sort of theme, and it leapfrogged everything else. In other words, your first contact goes from this contact to a sexual contact. There was no such thing as a friendly relationship, of a relationship that's platonic or anything like that. It went from good morning to I got you in bed. This was the way the thing came about. And (laughs) since it came that way you knew where they were coming from in the first place and that is, hey, don't even associate with them because the minute you speak to one, you're going to bed with him. And if you go to bed with him, you're going to have a monkey for a baby. Which was stupid. But it worked. It worked for a while. And as I said, the women wouldn't even speak because I guess they

thought if they speak, they'd already had intercourse. That's the way it seemed to be. So we, along with a whole lot of other men, were denied feminine friendship. And I think a lot of us would've just wanted to. . . . Every women you see you didn't want to go to bed with in the first place. There's a lot of ground in between the two. Of getting to know a person to getting to be friends with a person. Married people---we would have enjoyed just going to a family's home and sitting down, just talking with a family, being around a family.

I did get to know a family, more than one, during the days right after the war. And that was Frank. . . . There was a Portuguese man who lived in Kāne'ohe. His name will come to me later. We worked---this was during the time of the boiler plant. There was one or two other Blacks in the boiler plant. They were older than I. Frank Andrade. Frank Andrade was married to, his wife was Japanese. Frank used to provide transportation for us. Share-the-ride sort of thing. He'd pick up two or three of us and take us to work and take us back home. But Frank would invite you to his home. I think he had a daughter and I don't know if he had any sons or not. But just the pleasure of being in somebody's home was all the lot of us was looking for. We would have no more thought of disrespecting his household by trying to seduce his wife or seduce his daughter---no way. This was a friend of ours.

But like I said, the propaganda leapfrogged this whole thing. So therefore on first contact the women just decided, you are invisible until you sit down close to me, then I'll get away from you. But to answer your question, and I did in a long drawn-out way, I don't think that the civilians had any edge over the service personnel, nor the service personnel had an edge over the civilians. They had some USO [United Service Organizations] houses here, and I think as a civilian worker we could attend those USO places also. We had almost the same privileges as the military had. Even when we traveled, we traveled on a per diem. We traveled all first-class accommodations. When I went back, I traveled on orders and I had all first-class accommodations on the Pullman and that sort of thing, so we had almost all the privileges the military had. So when you were in Hawai'i in those days, civil service workers and military were treated about the same way.

WN: Let me ask you just a couple of more questions on CHA-3 before we move on. The section that you lived in CHA-3, was that 18th and 19th Street?

EG: Eighteenth and 19th Street, that sticks in my mind for some reason. Nineteenth Street, I think, was the last street there, and I think on most of those other streets had houses on both sides. Nineteenth Street, I think, only had houses on one side. On the *makai* side was the air strip, I think. There was a big fence there along the road that separated CHA-3 from the air field. Little later, they put up the bachelors' quarters, which was a four-story building. I don't know where the White bachelors' quarters were, but ours was right there at 18th and 19th Street.

WN: This was all Black?

EG: Yeah, all Black.

WN: So that somebody made the assignments according to race?

EG: Yeah. Remember now, [Harry S] Truman hadn't integrated the armed forces at that time and the [U.S.] Navy, I think, was the most segregated of the services, and their policies existed on all of their facilities. And CHA-3 was a naval facility operated by the navy and under

on all of their facilities. And CHA-3 was a naval facility operated by the navy and under naval jurisdiction. So whatever prevailed there was the navy policy. So you were assigned segregated quarters. It was a funny sort of thing because the mess halls, I don't think, were segregated. I don't think the mess halls were segregated unless you segregated yourselves in there. And I don't think the banquet hall was segregated either. Barbershop was . . .

WN: Barbershop was?

EG: Was. Beer garden wasn't, I recall. I think that people segregated themselves possibly in these places, I don't think it was forced on you.

WN: That was my next question, whether it was an institutional-type, organized segregation.

EG: No, I don't think it was institutional, no. I'm sure that individuals segregated themselves. But I don't think it was "organized segregation," using my term.

WN: And you said the navy was the most segregated of the branches?

EG: I think so. Now, navy and possibly marines. I don't think Blacks could even get in the marines. But as far as the military was concerned, if you got into the navy you were a mess boy. The army was less segregated. The air force was possibly---like I said, I tried to join the air force in December '42. There were very few Blacks in the air force.

WN: By being segregated did it remind you at all of home?

EG: CHA-3?

WN: Yeah.

EG: No. It just was maybe more of the same but in a lesser sense. It was an improvement over what I had been accustomed to because, as I said, to my way of thinking, it wasn't institutionalized, if you want to say that. However, the living accommodation was. And maybe I didn't expect any more. Didn't find it unusual, I think, at that time. Maybe over the years, though, as I became less indoctrinated with my Southern upbringing, maybe that was the thinking. Why did they bring me this far, you know, that sort of thing. But that may have been later on. In the beginning I possibly accepted it as a way of life and as the way things were supposed to have been. That was probably my first impression.

WN: Was what you got the same in terms of quality with the Whites?

EG: I would say yes. The four-unit buildings were all the same. The bachelors' quarters as far as that was concerned were the same. They were new buildings. And the rest of the facilities we were sharing on an equal basis, as far as I could see. I would say separate but equal in those cases where it was separated, segregated. We didn't have any Blacks running anything that I can think of. All the shops---the shops and the mess halls I think were probably staffed, by and large, by local people, and I'm sure that *Haoles* were in charge of it.

WN: Okay. You were talking earlier about certain propaganda that was spread or circulating around town about you guys . . .

EG: You mean about the Blacks, the Afro-Americans?

WN: Yeah. What did you try to do to . . .

EG: Dispel it?

WN: Yeah. Was there an attempt at all or . . .

EG: Probably on an individual basis. I dare say that we overcompensated by trying to disprove what we had been accused of being. I guess maybe we did. Maybe we did everything we could to try to show—and we're speaking now of not only the women but I suppose both men and women—that we were not what we had been accused of being. I think this is what we did. I think maybe this is why we decided to assimilate into the Hawaiian society.

WN: Okay, let me change tapes.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-74-2-93; SIDE ONE

WN: Okay, well, can you tell me something about Downtown [Honolulu]? What was it like as a young teenager?

EG: Wall-to-wall men—number one. You know, transportation-wise—I've thought about this since we started talking. Hawai'i had some unique transportation. Did you know we had jitneys here at one time?

WN: Uh huh. I've heard.

EG: Jitneys used to operate up and down King Street. They seemed to operate from Pearl Harbor. You would share a jitney ride. I don't know why—they should possibly bring that back because it was one way of helping to relieve some of the transportation problems. You had jitneys. You had trolleys. I've forgotten what sort of bus system you had from town to Pearl Harbor. You had the little train that ran from Downtown to Kahuku and then Wai'anāe side, I guess. But Downtown---for a while, I didn't even get Downtown.

WN: How long was it before . . .

EG: Before I got Downtown? It may have been six months or so.

WN: Six months? Woo! (Laughs)

EG: I remember six months or so. You know I told you that we used to go to work and then you'd be assigned to work with a crew. And I think one of the choice ones was this guy, Chu. I remember the name. Chu used to deliver furniture for the navy. Picked up, I guess, office furniture, stuff like that. And when you were assigned to work with Chu you came in town. You went Downtown and fooled around and had breakfast. I think this was my first

time coming Downtown. Here's my favorite mailman . . .

(Mail carrier enters. Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

WN: You went Downtown with Chu.

EG: Yeah. I'm sure his name was Chu.

WN: Chinese guy?

EG: He was Chinese or Korean. He may have been Chinese. I remember the first time we went down to have breakfast, somewhere on River Street—and there was two or three local guys, two or three of my teenage buddies were on this . . .

WN: Was Milton with you?

EG: No, Milton went to Pearl Harbor when he came here. He went to Pearl Harbor and I went to Ford Island. We sort of drifted apart for the first time in four years after we came to Hawai'i, I guess, because of the assignment to different areas. I've forgotten—I don't even think we had the same accommodations as far as housing was concerned.

WN: If I recall, I think there's a photo of you and Milton Downtown, right?

EG: We're still buddies. Yeah. But remember it had to be within nine months, okay? I'm trying to remember now my first impression of going Downtown. That picture was taken, I suppose, just before he left. And we by this time had become seasoned Hawai'i civil service workers. It didn't take us very long to really adapt ourselves to where we were. But I may have gone Downtown before that. I must have gone Downtown. It had to be before six months. Must've been because the natural thing to do would be to go in town to see what Honolulu was like on your day off.

WN: What day was that? Was that Sunday?

EG: I don't know. You didn't have any particular day off that I recall. Maybe at Ford Island you may have been off on a Sunday. But we were working pretty much six days a week. It may have been Sunday. It may have been a day of the week. No, I don't think it was Sunday.

But I think before you were asking me about some of the things that existed Downtown. Downtown was a honky-tonk. That's the only thing that I can recall. It was one big honky-tonk. Curio shops on Alakea and Hotel Street.

WN: Yeah.

EG: What's that building? That building right across from there. Right above that was the Army-Navy YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association]?

WN: Right, right, right.

EG: Right there where that building is, there were curio shops where they had cameras, somebody

was always taking pictures. And they'd have hula girl pictures in there, and curios, and cards, and knickknacks, and everything, I guess, that a guy wanted to pick up to send back home to show he's been in Hawai'i. There were bars all Downtown. Bars, curio shops, barbershops, tattoo shops, theaters. And from River Street—I think on both sides of River Street—Beretania Street, Smith Street, Nu'uuanu Street, between Hotel and Beretania Streets, were houses of prostitution. And wall-to-wall sailors and soldiers and civilians. And that seemed to be what I recall Honolulu being like in those days. And lines. There (were) lines that stretched around the block. And I used to tell people that, look, you got three lines. You get into (a) line, you're going to wind up in one of three places. You're going to wind up in a theater, a liquor store, (or) you're going to wind up at a house of prostitution. That was only three lines. You get in one of them, that's where you going to wind up. Like I said, I wasn't drinking in those days when I first came here so I wasn't that interested in going to the bars so we just walked up and down the street.

One of those days when we came. . . . I must've gone on the truck with Chu for more than once because I remember the first time we had breakfast. You see, I didn't used to eat rice. I wouldn't eat rice because I think the way they cooked it back home I didn't like it. And I've gotten used to the taste for rice over here. But I remember the first time going Downtown to have breakfast and they served me rice with eggs and, I think, Spam—I think that was about the only thing you could get in those days; no such thing as bacon. And I couldn't eat breakfast because I didn't have bread. That was my first experience. I think the Chinese-Hawaiian kid was William Lee. Lee was a little bit more progressive, a little bit more advanced. He was no older than the rest of us. He was a little more streetwise than the rest of us. So he was going to go up to one of the houses, right? Must've been about not quite noon, I suppose like eleven o'clock. But we got upstairs there—it was upstairs. And then you sit down. They had a little old entryway. And everybody's sitting down. Then you could look inside the booth where they had little curtains. And I think Lee went inside, but I looked at it and I decided no, it was not for me. And I came out. That was the closest I ever got to. . . . It was three bucks. Charged three dollars. And I know that some of the guys in the dormitory where we lived, this was the talk. On J-day they'd get up like they were going to work. Four, five o'clock in the morning to go Downtown and stand in one of those lines. And believe it or not, this was as much a part of Honolulu as anything else. But remember, I had all of the girls that I wanted when I was in high school that I wasn't paying for. This was against all my principles. Paying for sex with a woman? No way. So I never did go into one of those prostitutes, but it was a way of life.

WN: Was three dollars considered a lot?

EG: For the time that you spent there I think three dollars was a whole lot. When you were working that was three dollars out of your day's pay. For some guys it was, heck, it was great. They enjoyed---they looked forward to it.

WN: Were the prostitutes local or were they from the Mainland?

EG: I think they had some local. But one thing about it. Blacks couldn't go into all of the houses. I don't even know if I would've been allowed into this one or not because these were local guys that I was with. But I never did get to the point where someone said no, you cannot come in here. But I do know that the houses were restricted. There was one or two where Blacks went. And I don't even know where (they were).

They had other things. I'll tell you something else they had, they had taxi dancers. Taxi dancers was the thing that I spent my money on, you know, as far as contact with women. Right across from, you said, your grandfather's place?

WN: Yeah, the Swing Club, was it?

EG: No, it wasn't the Swing Club. Swing Club was on Hotel Street.

WN: Oh, okay. My grandfather's place was on Beretania and Nu'uaniu.

EG: Nu'uaniu. There was---now I can't recall the name of it but . . .

WN: Brown Derby?

EG: No, Brown Derby was across from Liberty Theater? Yeah, Liberty Theater was on Nu'uaniu Street, right? Okay, you're coming up Nu'uaniu Street, and if you made a left turn on Beretania Street right on the corner. . . . You say, if you made a right turn it would've been your grandfather's warehouse, right?

WN: Which direction is this?

EG: Going Nu'uaniu toward the mountains.

WN: Okay, going Nu'uaniu toward the mountains.

EG: You take a left on Beretania.

WN: Mm hmm.

EG: This was a dance, taxi dance.

WN: But it wasn't the Brown Derby, though. Brown Derby . . .

EG: No, Brown Derby was on Nu'uaniu Street.

WN: I know what you mean because I do remember a dance hall.

EG: There was a [taxi] dance hall over there. And this one was restricted too. The bars Downtown were segregated.

WN: Really?

EG: Yeah. Johnny Walsh had one on King Street—King Street and, I think, Smith [Street], somewhere. It was called Johnny Walsh's Bar. Johnny Walsh also had the Zebra Room. Segregated in one, and the other one, Zebra Room, wasn't segregated. Seemingly, from Kalākaua up toward Waikīkī segregation didn't exist. For some reason we never got much beyond Richards Street. Let's go to Punchbowl. No, let's take it to Alapa'i Street. We didn't hardly go much beyond Alapa'i Street, for some reason, for most of our activity. So most of it was centered from that way back toward River Street and 'A'ala Park. So the taxi dances

was one of the places that I would frequent, that we would dance, and it would probably cost you more than the prostitutes. But I think ten minutes the bell would ring and you'd be dancing. But even they were segregated. There were plenty of them though. They were all up and down from Nu'uanu Street all the way down to 'A'ala Park. There used to be an 'A'ala Street. 'A'ala Street was pretty much, I think, frequented by Filipinos to a great degree. That's a Filipino hangout. Filipino business, Filipino bars. And there was a taxi dance down there, and I think that was less segregated.

WN: When you say "segregated" now, what are we talking about here? We're talking about . . .

EG: Well, some of those taxi dances, Blacks could go in.

WN: I see.

EG: I don't know if it was a two-way street, this taxi dance that I'm talking about, that we spent most of our time in. . . . The name will come to me, I'm sure. Whether Whites couldn't come in there or something like that, but. . . . There were certain places that catered to certain groups.

WN: So there were some taxi dance house that were just [frequented by] Blacks?

EG: Yes, this was one. Pretty much only Blacks or locals could go. For some reason, Filipinos and Blacks spent a lot of time under the same conditions, especially this taxi dance, because I remember seeing Filipino guys up there. Not too many other local guys, but primarily Blacks. It was also about this time, I think, that some of the rumors about us (had) been dispelled, because I know a lot of the guys who married taxi dance girls, girls who worked in taxi dance halls. To my way of thinking, you have types of people who will leave his original hometown to go somewhere else. You have the one with the pioneer spirit, and he is—I don't want to use the term "streetwise"—he's a little bit ahead of the crowd in his thinking and his abilities and his know-how. He's a survivor. And this is the one I'm thinking in terms of. You had a lot of us, you had a lot of those people that came here. And they were possibly that way at home and decided, hey look, Hawai'i affords me what I'm looking for. Some of these people may have been dodging the draft. They were usually almost street people. I think some of the military guys got out here in those days because they got discharged here and they became part of the street crowd. Milton and I were leaders in our little group, one way or another. And even (at home), we were sort of pioneers.

WN: This is Georgia?

EG: This would be—yes. Even when we were at home, we ventured out. We ventured to places where others waited to see the outcome. We were usually good at communicating. Most of them were good at dancing. And this is the crowd I guess that sort of broke down some of the things that have been said about us. So when the local girls became exposed to these guys, they found that, hey, this guy can be fun. He dresses well. He dances well. He does this well. So, therefore, hey, this guy's okay. So this initial contact so very often may have been through this sort of relationship. Here's a girl who is working in one of the taxi dances and she's doing it for the money. She makes darn good money at it. She's not a prostitute. And the guy is not a pimp. But he is fun to be with, okay? And he doesn't have a tail, and he doesn't have all these other things that was said about us. So this seems to

have been, somehow or another, the door through which we came to get to know the local girls.

WN: Most of the taxi dance girls were local?

EG: As far as I can recall, yes, most of them were. The taxi dance hall that I'm thinking of, the one that we went to most of the time, I think most of them were local. I don't recall seeing any *Haole* girls in there. There may have been taxi dance halls with *Haole* girls in them. But this one was local girls. And as I said, a lot of guys that I got to know, got to be friends later on, married taxi hall dancers. These were some of the girls also who would frequent our "Ten Bachelor" parties, okay. So these would be some of the local girls. This was, to my way of thinking, some of our first initial social contacts, through that way, through that source. But there were plenty of taxi dancers around, taxi dance halls.

Trying to see what else was unique around in those days. Oh, I tell you something else. A lot of tailor shops. There were a lot of tailor shops in those days. Tailor shops. Tattoo shops. A lot of sign shops were around. You know, you don't see too much of that anymore, but you know these handmade signs? There was a lot of that in those days. For some reason I guess there was a demand for it. But I remember khaki pants was the thing in those days. And at the tailor shops, we'd all have our khaki pants made. Drapes. Of course, drapes were still popular.

WN: Yeah, drapes.

EG: You remember drapes? Tailor shops made those. All a part of the Honolulu scene.

WN: Who wore drapes mostly?

EG: Blacks and Filipinos—here.

WN: Interesting.

EG: Mexicans did, too, I think, in California. Zoot suits, there were zoot suits.

WN: When I was growing up in the fifties drapes were big in my high school, but I just was wondering how it originated.

EG: You may have a lot of Whites then and non-Blacks who wore drapes or zoot suits, but to my knowledge I think more or less on the Mainland it was a Black thing. And I think over here, Filipinos.

WN: Ernest, what I want to do is stop here and continue another day. At that time what we can do is finish up talking about Downtown and then get into postwar and things you did after the war. Okay?

EG: How are we doing?

WN: We're doing fine.

EG: Are we? Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-75-3-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ernest L. Golden (EG)

May 5, 1993

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Ernest Golden on May 5, 1993, and we're in his office in the airport industrial area in Honolulu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Ernest. Let's get started again. We were talking last time about taxi dancing during wartime Honolulu. Can you tell me something about it, how it works? What was a taxi dance?

EG: Taxi dance was paid-for dancing. (That is) the best that I can explain it. The Casino Dance Hall was the one that I was trying to (remember).

WN: Oh, okay.

EG: Casino Dance Hall.

WN: That was on Beretania?

EG: That was on Beretania Street. Beretania and Nu'uaniu Street. And it was upstairs. I think we entered on Nu'uaniu Street. From a booth you bought scripts or tickets—ten cents each. You select the girl you wanted to dance with if you had a preference. The girls would see you with the tickets. And they were like movie tickets, perforated little tickets. Ten cents each. And I think there was a control as far as the amount of time you got for your ticket. A bell would ring. Maybe this bell would ring possibly two or three times—I'm guessing now—during the playing of a record. So I imagine it may have been thirty cents or more per number. And you just pick up a handful of scripts. And you'd dance. And the bell would ring. She'd tear off a ticket or she'd just let 'em run. Or some of the guys used to just go and sit down on the side just to talk with the girl just to have feminine companionship. But that's basically what it was. And you danced. At least you had feminine companionship for a period of time.

WN: So you'd go with like a roll of scripts . . .

EG: Right.

WN: . . . and then you'd go up to someone . . .

EG: Right.

WN: . . . and just say you want to dance . . .

EG: Yeah.

WN: . . . and give them one script?

EG: She would take the script. You could give it to her, but I think most of the guys just started dancing. You were dancing and the bell would ring, you know. It'd go off because there was a booth there. And the controller—I don't know what they call this person in that booth—that person had a bell, like a buzzer sort of thing. And based on that, that meant that (there) was one script. So it depended on her, I guess. You had the scripts in your hand and she'd just tear them off, you know.

WN: So if you wanted to keep dancing with that same woman she'd just tear off another script.

EG: Yeah.

WN: Or you could just break it off there.

EG: Yeah, you could break it off there and then use it to dance with somebody else.

WN: I see.

EG: But that's pretty much how it worked. And there was a curfew, so I suppose it would start, oh maybe six o'clock in the evening and I'm sure you had to be out by ten o'clock, nine to ten o'clock, I suppose.

WN: So there were no problems with blackout, things like that?

EG: Well, the curfew was on. And we were supposed to be, I think, off the streets at ten o'clock. And unless you had somewhere to stay in town, that meant that you had to be back at the dormitory by ten o'clock. So I'm sure that this had some bearing on the time that the place would close. I'm glad that I could remember that name, Casino Dance Hall. As I mentioned before, there was one or two others. I think there was one on 'A'ala Street that Blacks could go to. But we couldn't go to all of them. I don't recall the name of the one that was on 'A'ala Street. And there may have been one on Maunakea Street. But I don't recall for sure about that one either. But they were the thing in those days.

WN: Yeah. Were there always enough girls there, or was it more . . .

EG: There were usually more men than women. The women seemed to dress for the evening, and they would have, if I recall correctly, formal gowns, formal wear, and so it looked as if you were going to a ballroom dance or something.

WN: And what would you guys wear?

EG: I'm sure that we did dress. In those days, it was the thing. If you came in town for an

evening, you dressed. A lot of guys did dress to the max, you might say. Tie, coat, and all that sort of thing. But I don't know if there was a dress code required. But I think it was just the person themselves who, his own pride that dictated the mode of dress. Or how he would dress. But if I'm correct, the girls were all in evening wear—long gowns and that sort thing.

WN: And they were mostly local girls?

EG: As I recall, mostly local girls. And in those days it was kind of difficult for me to distinguish between what the ethnic background may have been. Looking back now, there was a lot of Filipino girls. I don't know, I think there may have been some Puerto Rican girls. I happen to know some of these people. I got to know them personally because friends of mine married some of these girls and so I got to know them on a more personal basis later. But they were primarily local girls.

WN: Do you remember about how much you spent on one night at a taxi-dance hall?

EG: Oh, lord have mercy. I can't recall. I have no idea.

WN: (Laughs) I mean was it a big spending situation?

EG: It could cost you some money. Now remember, those records were about three minutes, I imagine. That was thirty cents because that bell may ring three times during that period of time. So if you were going to be dancing for an hour or two you could spend a little money.

WN: (Laughs) Right.

EG: I don't recall what was spent. I don't know this on a firsthand basis, but you know how rumors are—that some of the guys who had been down under on the front or something came back with a lot of money and was offering these girls—more or less for an evening, just to be with them—\$145 or something like this. I think it was just for a social evening, not for any sort of sexual relationship or anything like that. It may have been in the back of their minds but I think this was a social thing between two people. I mean, there was some money spent. It could cost them. But to me, I think I would much rather have spent the money that way than in a house of prostitution. To me, it would be much more acceptable.

WN: Well, it seems like you established some lasting friendships based on that. I mean you were telling me about the Ten Bachelors club. Was some of the friendships you made at the taxi-dance halls, was that. . . .

EG: Some of the guys that I've made friends with were some of the guys that married taxi[-dance girls]. And some of these marriages only came later because part of the time there was a shack-up arrangement between these guys. The marriage may have come later. But I do know (a man) that I worked with in later years was living with one of the girls who was a taxi dancer. They may have gotten married later. But for a long time they lived together. Quite a few of the guys had marriage this way, especially from the Casino. But a lot of friendships. . . . Yeah, a lot of my friends were from this area. A lot of my friends were what we call night people. When I say "night people," I don't know how to really define this. A lot of them had been working and possibly had been in the service but no longer. These are the guys I'm speaking of now. And we frequented one or two bars that were Downtown. Two

Jacks was one. Was a gathering place for most of us. And from here a lot of friends were made. Then little later on, there were established some after-hour places that we used to frequent. And this was because the bars, I think, closed at one time, used to close around midnight, one o'clock. But then after the bars were all closed, then some of the guys had houses and they'd open those up (and) would sell booze and food and everything else until, oh, six, seven o'clock (laughs) in the morning.

WN: Yeah? This even during curfew time?

EG: Did we have after-hour? A lot of this history now, I might be blending some of it together. But I'm sure there may have been one or two houses that you could go to and stay. As long as you don't come out in the streets. If I'm not mistaken, I think there was one in Waikīkī. I've forgotten the name of the guy who owned it, though. Somewhere near Waikīkī that used to be open practically all night.

WN: Relations between Black defense workers or Black military with local girls or Whites, local girls getting married. Were there any problems, do you remember? Was there any kind of taboo—unwritten rule?

EG: There may have been some unwritten laws. I'm trying to recall. There (were) unwritten laws. There was a friend of mine. I can't recall his name. Bobby. But I can't recall if Bobby was an officer. And he married a *Haole wahine*. And they used to have problems. It was the Whites—the White guys—were going to make an issue of it. And even when my wife [Evangeline Silva Golden] and I were dating—and this comes closer to the fifties—we'd be walking down the streets and there would either be some remarks made and most definitely stares. My wife is Portuguese. There was no question about it. I think a lot of it was due to jealousy. And a lot of it was due to discrimination, prejudice. But most definite there was always something there.

WN: Do you think it was—your wife being Portuguese—was it, could it have been that they thought your wife was *Haole*?

EG: Yes. They'd consider my wife *Haole*. Now whether. . .

WN: But she wasn't *Haole*. If they knew she was local or . . .

EG: This is why I'm saying some jealousy may have been here because any time anyone had a girlfriend or a date or a woman companion, then those who didn't were going to be—how do you say?—they were going to be jealous of you. So a lot of jealousy may have come along. You know, you've got one and I don't. So in this particular case, I think, even if it had been known that she had been local, that animosity would've been there. And then what gave in their eyesight any justification was that being Portuguese she was Caucasian and they could not make the fine distinction whether she was from here or from the Mainland. So that gave them (laughs) justifiable reasons to say, hey look, you're overstepping the bounds here. But it was there. We're talking (forty) years ago, and a lot of the things have escaped my memory. A lot of it.

WN: You're excused for that.

EG: (Laughs) Thanks. I appreciate it.

(Laughter)

WN: One question I wanted to ask you relating to our last interview was, do you remember the MPs—the military MPs—having any jurisdiction over the civilian defense workers or were you defense workers solely under the jurisdiction of the local Honolulu police?

EG: I remember MPs. I remember vice squad.

WN: This is Honolulu vice squad—police?

EG: Yeah. And the MPs because we were on military bases—on military establishments—where I lived until the late forties. We came under the jurisdiction of MPs. I don't recall having any problems with MPs as such because I never did anything for them to bother me for. That was probably the main reason. I don't recall too much as far as Honolulu police were concerned because I wasn't driving, and I didn't have a car in those days so I didn't come into contact that much with the Honolulu Police Department as such. That's about it. The vice squad thing came later. (WN laughs.) It was pretty much after, I suppose, the fifties. And this came about because my wife and I were dating. And this was when I met my wife, in the fifties—about 1950.

WN: You got married in '51, right? [EG and Evangeline Silva were married November, 1950.]

EG: Yeah. I met my wife in 1950. A very good friend of ours, married couple who lived at CHA-3. My wife's family was from—lived in Kāne'ohe, and she stayed with this family—this couple. And we dated under their supervision, so to speak. And I remember one night they had loaned us their car and we had gone out somewhere, maybe to a movie or something and came back. Just parked in the parking lot, back of their apartment. Two or three vice squadron came up on each side of the car and tried to create something. So I remember this incident because it affected me directly. Now I must have known of many, many instances of vice squad and many instances of MPs and what they did. But as I say, a lot of this, because it didn't affect me firsthand, I can't recall any of the specifics. I do recall that the local police had khaki-type uniform. But not too much. I never came too much in contact with law enforcement parties.

WN: (Laughs) Well, I'm not assuming that you did.

EG: No, no . . .

WN: I think I'm asking the question because of, the stereotype that was generated throughout the town of, you know, when the war was in force and military and defense workers came in. Some of the publications you read is that, you know, it really strained the social structure of Honolulu. And I'm just won . . .

EG: I'm accepting it that way. But yet, I think, in order for me to recall, I recall most incidents that have a direct bearing on me, for some reason or another, then I'm able to come back with something. And there must've been many incidents that I should be aware of and I am aware of, but it just doesn't come up.

WN: You were too good a citizen.

EG: I'm not that good a citizen (WN laughs) because, you know. . . . No, I'm not. I'm not that good. I dare say that I possibly should have been put in jail some time or another but I (have) never been.

WN: (Laughs) We were touching little about the relationship between Blacks and Filipinos here, and we were trying to find a handle on that. Have you given much more thought on that? Why it was, you know, what's the perception that you had why. . . . Let me back up.

EG: I have . . .

WN: Why do you think Blacks and Filipinos got along?

EG: I don't really know. We may have been somewhat in the same boat to some degree because at that time I don't think there were that many Filipino women here. And there were very few Black women here. So we may have had some similarities in that category. It's just that I have made friends with different ethnic groups throughout the years that I have been in Hawai'i and it's a cross section of practically all representation of all ethnic groups here. I've found Filipino people to be a very warm-type people. This may have had something to do with it. During the time when I first got here, we were laborers and they were laborers. So we worked together. And they didn't seem to have any hang-ups or anything like this that would prevent friendships being established. This was one of the things. Here we were both working together, doing the same type of work. They evidently had come from the pineapple fields and cane fields, I suppose, of Hawai'i. And we had come in from the Mainland. They with few or no skills and we with few or no skills. So we were sort of tossed together as work teams. And I'm going to be repetitious now, but working together, (had they been) a different type of people, we possibly would not have gotten to be friends. But because they were a warm-type people, no barriers existed. Filipinos may have been the first ethnic group that I got to know along with some Hawaiians. But the Hawaiian people were few and far between. There seemed to be more Filipinos here that I got to know. In those days, anytime that someone invited you into their home it was a special treat. And I think, among some of the first homes that I visited with, were Filipinos. This was the first ethnic group.

But over the years, there (were) the Filipino, the Portuguese—another ethnic group—Puerto Rican. And I'm almost going in order. Not too much Chinese. Later, Japanese from the time I was in Honolulu art school. And then later on *Haole* groups. And a lot of the other ethnic groups in between. But these basic ones, I got to know and have very, very dear friends in all, in each one that I named. Friendships that I treasure. But that's the only rationale that I can give for why Filipinos and Blacks got along together. Neither one of us seemed to have carried a lot of baggage that prevented it. This is basically what it is, I think. Filipinos just don't seem to have that sort of baggage (others) carry. I don't think most Blacks have it. Why? I don't know. But I think it's good that (we) don't.

WN: That's interesting. It seems like a good point that you just made. But also I think a lot of it is the bachelor culture, too.

EG: Yes.

WN: You said earlier, you know, a lot of Filipinos came here as bachelors, and there weren't too many Filipino women. Similar situation to Blacks . . .

EG: Yes. Neither one of us had too many, you know. And even in the Casino Dance Hall, Filipinos seemed to frequent it along with Blacks. Now there weren't too many other ethnic groups that I recall frequented the Casino Dance Halls. But I'm sure that these two groups did. There were taxi-dance halls, I think, where only Filipinos went to. And there were taxi-dance halls, I'm sure, that only *Haoles* went to. And there were taxi-dance halls that others only went to—other ethnic groups. But this one particular one seemed to have been frequented by Blacks and Filipinos. And so I suppose, as you know, the lack of feminine companionship, wives, and girlfriends and that sort of things, we both lacked. It may have been a common denominator there.

And then on the other hand, it may not. If you stretched the point, it could've have been a reason for us not to have been able to get along because women—feminine companionship—would've been at a premium. And it could've been a good reason for us to have friction. On the other hand, turning the coin over, it could've been a darn good reason because this was the main reason why most of the Blacks and *Haoles* didn't get along. That's always been the case. Because he always thought you wanted his woman. So (the) bottom line was, as far as I'm concerned, (the bases of) most segregation and discrimination is because of women. I think that is the bottom line. If (laughs) they weren't worried about a Black man going with a White woman, I dare say there would have been no discrimination whatsoever. Power, money, none of the rest of it would've meant that much, but when you come down to the women, that was the main thing. But that's my assessment (laughs).

WN: (Laughs) Yeah. Okay. Well, I've asked you so many questions about sociological impact in Hawai'i. Let's get back to just Ernest Golden. In 1946, the war was over. And you left civil service in '46.

EG: Yes.

WN: Why did you do that?

EG: That's a good question. Never thought about it really. I was attending the Honolulu School of Art. And I think, if my memory serves me right, I decided to go to art school full time, meaning I decided to devote my time to attaining an art education. And I think to do that I decided to give up civil service. I was offered a job in the school to help defray my tuition. And that's the only justification I can give for giving up civil service. This is the only thing I could think of. But yet when I did so I was giving up a lot of security because I did not have the security of housing that was available to civil service personnel.

WN: Even after the war ended in '45 you could still live in CHA-3 if you worked?

EG: Yes. If you were still working civil service you could still live at CHA-3. A lot of families were doing that. And I think a lot of them moved out many years later after the war was over. But I was giving up that. For some reason I felt I could give up (the) security. Also, I must have completed my contract. Because without completing a contract, I would not have had the privilege of returning to my home with the government paying the transportation. I have never thought about this. Now that you brought it up. . . . Because first of all I don't

recall deciding to stay in Hawai'i until I got married. But even then there may have been thoughts in the back of my mind that this was not my home even then. I didn't come to Hawai'i to stay more than eighteen months. I came in '43, February of '43. Sometime around July '44 the eighteen months must've been up. I did exercise the option of taking a trip back, then came back and started another eighteen-month contract. This may have been up in '46. And the ticket to return home must have been available for me. I may have had a little savings but I didn't have hardly nothing to speak of. And the job that I was going to only provided me with the bare necessities. But it was to attend art school. And I went more or less for commercial art. And I was looking forward to becoming an art director. I think the art directors' field was pretty open. I didn't pursue it all the way to the end, but that was (the) goal. And that was the reason I gave up civil service.

WN: So here we are in '46. The war is ended. Your contract is over. I would assume that a lot of people that you knew or worked with were going back at this time?

EG: A lot of them must've returned. It must have been a majority because there were only few of us remaining. There were families and married couples that lived on Eighteenth and Nineteenth Street. And there were children that was either brought over as kids—some kids were born here during that period of time to these families. I think after I left civil service I went and rented from one of the families because they had apartments and everything like that. So I don't know how we did it, but somehow or another it was arranged so I could rent. But I was not civil service at the time.

WN: So you continued to live at CHA-3?

EG: For a while, yes. I lived at CHA-3 until December of '49, '48 or '49. I went with Honolulu Rapid Transit, I think, qualified December [1948]. So around December [1948] I still lived at CHA-3. Then I moved from there.

WN: So from the time your contract ended to '49 you were paying to live there. Paying rent.

EG: I was renting not from the navy, but from someone who had a home there.

WN: And prior to that was it free? I don't know if I asked you that.

EG: No, no. (WN laughs.) I think we paid a small amount. I've forgotten what it was. I don't think we paid a heck of a lot. But I think we paid some. I don't think it was free. No, we must've paid something to live there.

WN: Okay. So, you know, you really then didn't have an inkling whether you were going to stay here or not. You were just sort of going with the flow . . .

EG: That's true.

WN: . . . up until you got married.

EG: Yeah, up until the time I got married.

WN: After Honolulu School of Art, you started in '48 at Bader's [The Display House]?

EG: Yes. I worked at Bader's display company at the pier that was at the end of Bishop Street.

WN: Bishop ends at Aloha Tower.

EG: At the end of Bishop. There was a pier down there. Pier something. I forgot what the pier was [Piers 7, 8 or 9]. Bader's display company was in there. And I worked with them doing displays and that sort of thing because they were doing window displays, until they went out of business. But it couldn't have been too long.

WN: This is window displays?

EG: Yeah, there was some military contracts we set up displays for. Bader's made the displays. We put them together, the artwork and everything like that. And [Bader's] was providing window displays for several businesses Downtown and also some of the military bases. I found it interesting work. One I wouldn't have minded staying with because it was creative. And just out of art school I had a good background, a good feel (for) it.

The Honolulu School of Art was quite an experience. One of the best experiences in my life. There have been little pockets of good times that were better than others. That was one of them.

WN: What motivated you to do it?

EG: To go into the art school?

WN: Yeah.

EG: From early childhood I was interested in drawing. And didn't have an opportunity in high school because there was no program for it that I knew of. Didn't know too much about the art field. I always liked drawing. Even prior to going to Honolulu School of Art I had sent for correspondence course and did some portraits for—I was still at CHA-3 in the bachelors quarters—and did portraits of some of the guys around there. And then later I went into the school of art. But the school of art was a totally beautiful experience. Have you heard of Tadashi Sato?

WN: Yeah, mm hmm.

EG: Sato and I were products of that same school. We started out pretty much together. You know, I mentioned I enjoyed some very good friends? He's one of the friends that I had—still whenever we see each other. There was another guy by the name of Wallace Ige. Ige lived right over here on. . . . What's the name of this street?

WN: Ualena?

EG: Is that Ualena? That's not Ualena.

WN: Ualena is over here.

EG: Whatever the street is right here. That loop.

WN: Waiwai Loop.

EG: Waiwai Loop. Ige lived over there. Not too far from where Skylane Inn is. The last I heard he was in Los Angeles, California somewhere. Wallace Ige and I became very, very close friends. I spent a lot of nights in his home with his family over there. The school of art was where I wanted to be after I had finished high school. We had a beautiful group of people. And good cross section of various ethnic groups.

WN: This is part of the [Honolulu] Academy of Arts?

EG: Mm hmm. It was [located] on the [Honolulu] Academy of Arts grounds.

WN: It was on the grounds of the . . .

EG: It was on the grounds. What's that street back of Beretania Street?

WN: Kīna'u?

EG: Kīna'u Street. We had our entrance on Kīna'u Street. Man named Willson Stamper was the director. And he brought modern art into, to my way of thinking, into Hawai'i. I remember one time that school gave an (art) exhibition. I wasn't in that exposition. I didn't present anything. They had all the local artists (represented), and I think most of the (awards) went to Honolulu School of Art students. It was that good. It was fantastic. A totally new breed of cat.

WN: Was tuition reasonable?

EG: I think it was reasonable. But I didn't have to pay anything because I was working my way through. I've forgotten what it was, but I think it was fairly reasonable. A lot of the guys were on the GI bill. And this is how a lot of them (paid their tuition), on the GI bill.

But yeah, I went to Bader's after that, after the Honolulu School of Art.

WN: Yeah. So you left Bader's because Bader's went out of business . . .

EG: Yeah, they went out of business.

WN: . . . while you were there?

EG: Yeah.

WN: And then you went over to HRT [Honolulu Rapid Transit, Co.]. What did you do over there?

EG: I was a bus operator. You had to qualify after your training. I qualified in December [1948]. And I drove a bus until, I think, May. But I had too many accidents (WN laughs). I had a major . . .

WN: Really?

EG: Well, I had more than one—chargeable accidents they called them.

WN: Chargeable accidents?

EG: Yeah, you know, where the driver is at fault. This one that I had was a major one. It was (the) second one. It was at Kapi'olani and Kalākaua. And I was coming from Kaimukī. And it was in the afternoon when all the traffic—it must have been around three-thirty. But there was no need. I was young (WN laughs). I rationalize it this way. I had qualified during the Christmas rush. They were rather lax as far as driving (the) bus fast to keep up with the traffic, right? And I never did get out of that habit. So here I was coming from Kaimukī and driving fast when I'm not supposed to. And the policy was that you did not have to speed in order to maintain an on-time schedule because, you know, if you were running late they'd always compensate for it in another way, right?

WN: Right. Hold it. Let me turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay.

EG: I was coming from Kaimukī and, I think, going to Pearl Harbor—that run. And there's a little bridge, I suppose, if you recall. It was Kau Kau Korner at that time.

WN: Kau Kau Korner, yeah.

EG: There was a little bridge.

WN: Yeah, it's still there.

EG: Okay, that little incline, that little grade there coming toward town. And there was a little drizzle on the road. And the cops used to hold the traffic, you know, they control traffic at key points. And this particular time---if it had been a regular traffic light I probably would have timed it and made it. But the police held the traffic coming from Waikīkī a little bit longer than normal, and when I got ready to stop at the intersection that bus wouldn't stop because of slippery roads. And I plowed into one of the first cars that was released from Waikīkī going toward King Street and knocked down a utility pole and came to rest across the street, across Kalākaua on the *mauka* side. And there was a bus stop over there. I was fortunate though because usually that little island—there was a little island there?

WN: Mm hmm.

EG: And usually a lot of people were there. And I went up on that little island. Fortunately no one was there. Minor Lee was the guy I had hit. Minor Lee was bad. Minor Lee must have been Hawaiian-Chinese or something like that, about five [feet] eight [inches], and solidly built. I didn't know him personally, but I knew of him. So he said, "You tore my car," and all that

sort of stuff.

I just raised my hands, "Okay, I'm wrong, I'm wrong," and that sort of thing.

He decided not to do anything to me. But then the inspector came along (and Minor Lee grabs him by the collar). And the inspector said, "Okay, we'll give you a new car, we'll give you a new car." (Laughs)

WN: Did you know him [Minor Lee] before the accident?

EG: Yes, yes. I knew (of) him before that. So when he started walking toward me I said, "I'm wrong. Sorry."

WN: It shows what a small town Honolulu was. You plow into somebody you know.

EG: Yeah. I don't know if he knew me very well, but I knew of him quite well. I knew his reputation.

WN: Did it help lead to your dismissal?

EG: Oh, yes. Oh yes. They said, "We don't want you driving any more HRT buses." So I was unemployed. And this was about the end of May.

WN: By the way, what kind of bus was it? Was it the stick shift or was that. . . . It wasn't a trolley that. . .

EG: No, it wasn't a trolley. It was a shift, it was a manual shift. I should have slowed down. There was no reason for me to be driving as fast as I was. But let's see, how old was I then?

WN: Yeah, you were young.

EG: About twenty-five, twenty-six years old. I lost my job. I was out of work for three months. That's a funny thing. You know, you were asking me about my physical condition or my classification during the war. I was 1-A throughout the war, A-1, 1-A, whatever it was. And good military material. And I had tried to get employment because you could get employment through the military. I tried for paratroopers. And for some reason, they told me their quota was closed. They had quotas. Quotas for Whites. Quotas for Blacks and that sort of thing. So the quotas (were) closed. I went down to Aloha Tower. This was all during the three-month period of time after I lost my job at HRT [in 1949]. I went to work at the airport in September—September 1. So it was during this period of time that I also tried out for the officer's candidate school. They told me to take the exam to see if I'd pass the exam. (I did pass) with, oh, a score of about eighty-five or ninety, somewhere around there. The guy's telling me, "Look. Okay, you passed it, but now you've got to pay your way." And I think he said to Texas in order to go to school there and take the exam. So I gave that up and said the heck with it; I couldn't afford it anyway. So for about three months I was unemployed and this was not a very good time in my life. But somehow or another I made it through. I must've had a little savings but it was pretty much all gone by the end of August. Possibly should have gone back to the Mainland. But I guess by that time I liked Hawai'i. I had made a lot of friends. So at this time I guess I must've been trying to find something to sustain me

here. It may have been during this time that I decided to make Hawai'i a home. This was in '49.

WN: Had you met your wife by then?

EG: No. I didn't meet my wife until the following year. It was in May of 1950 that I met my wife. From HRT, Honolulu Rapid Transit, I went to work at the [Honolulu] Airport for Brazell's Porter Services. This was a man who'd come out of San Francisco and started the first porter company here.

WN: Hampton. His name was . . .

EG: Hampton Brazell.

WN: Brazell.

EG: B-R-A-Z-E-L-L.

WN: Okay.

EG: And I think Aloha Airlines, it's called TPA, was just getting started about that time.

WN: TPA? What is that?

EG: TPA—Trans-Pacific Airlines which is now Aloha Airlines. [Trans-Pacific Airlines was founded in 1946.]

WN: Oh, okay.

EG: Trans-Pacific Airlines I think they were flying DC-3s. But I think they may have been doing something prior to that. But I think they went into the passenger field because I approached Brazell that time and asked him for a job. Must've been about the end of May or 1st of June. He said, "Well, listen. I'm expecting a new airline to come in. If so, then I'll get in touch with you and give you a job." So TPA came into being, and he did give us a job. September the first, 1949, I started.

WN: Before we get into some of your porter experience, you were at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. You liked it. It was great experience. Then you went to Bader's display.

EG: Yes.

WN: Then they went out of business. Then you went to HRT. Were you looking at the same time for a job relating to what you wanted to do, which was art?

EG: Good question. I think at that time, no. During this period of time Tadashi Sato, we had all pretty much come out of this school of art about the same time. And Tadashi went to Pratt Institute. And he stayed in Pratt Institute for a period of time. I don't know how much time he spent there, but he came back and he had a studio. He got a studio on Queen Emma Street (and) Beretania. Used to be (a) rooming house there. We called him "Sugar." Sugar had a

studio there. He was making it as an artist, doing the things that an artist does and that is, you pay your dues. And Sugar was paying dues in those days. And I think I decided at that time, no, I'm going to get into something that I can make some money. And I think I sort of deviated or detoured from the art field and decided, hey, I'm going to make some money first and then decide (laughs). When I was in the art school, fine arts had not been my primary thing. Fine arts was going to be a sideline. I was making commercial art my major, if you want to call it that, because that's the road you take (for) art director. But Sato was fine arts. He later, as I guess you know and everybody else knows, he made a name for himself in that field. I sometimes I wish I had been willing to suffer the consequences in order to do that. But no. I decided then I wanted to make some money. I didn't want to be hungry.

So the jobs that I was looking for would not have been art-related. I was looking for something that was going to make some money. And I think this is what I found. Not for the long run, in a sense. But for the short haul. The job that I got served that purpose. No, I wasn't looking for that type of thing. The porter service served my purpose quite well because it was immediate money every day. And this is what I wanted. And as I said, portering or skycapping is the term that's used now, is not for generating big income compared to the professional field, but it does give you spending money on a daily basis. Those of us who were skycaps had money every day that we could spend every day and knew that the next day we'd have some more money to spend.

WN: When did Hampton Brazell start the porter . . .

EG: Nineteen forty-seven.

WN: Forty-seven. So right after the war.

EG: He started 1947.

WN: Was there porter services during the war?

EG: No. Hampton Brazell was the pioneer for that sort of thing here. One thing that I've often wanted to do was somehow or another write his history. Get the history of Hampton Brazell (recorded). He was quite a man. He didn't have a high school education. I don't know if he even completed grammar school. But he was the creator of a lot of things. He started porter companies in the state. He was a pioneer of that.

To give you an idea of some of the other things he did, he designed clothes. Back sometime in the late forties, early fifties, we were all wearing aloha shirts that were made from drapery cloth. Now you were too young to know this, but instead of aloha shirts like this they were almost like a bush jacket thing. But they used drapery cloth. It was quite popular. Two things that were popular during the war and right after the war. One was khaki pants. And then later the aloha shirts that were made almost in a bush jacket style—they didn't have a belt in the back—but it was almost like a smock. It was a cross between a smock and a bush jacket made out of drapery material. You know those rattan covers and that sort of stuff. And everybody wore one. Brazell decided he would do something different. He created a regular sports jacket out of it with the lapels and a belt in the back and everything. And we'd modeled those things for the first time, three of us. He made one for him, one for me, and one for another guy, all worked at airport. We modeled them up and down Waikīkī. Walked around. Everybody

looking at us. "What are these guys?" Dressed to the max. Later, if you might recall, there were some very flowery (coats) came out of Florida—jackets, print-type jackets. You've seen them. You may not remember now. But Brazell had them long before these things came (out).

He had a Chevy. He was buying Chevys in those days. I think it was a '52 or '53 Chevy and put fishtails on it. Made it like a Cadillac. And here was a miniature Cadillac. He redesigned his cars. He did a lot of things. The guy did a lot.

He was considered for a long time the honorary mayor of that section around Two Jacks and Smith Street. Everyone knew him at Waikīkī. And we're talking in the fifties. All during the fifties and possibly maybe early sixties, but he was well known, very well known.

He and I became very good friends. He employed me and we became very good friends. He employed me in '49. He finally made me his righthand man. He didn't have the education. He had the intelligence and the creativity to do a lot of things, but his business needed organizing. He had a small crew of, let me see, four and three. There were seven of us when I started. He had a small crew of seven men, but it was not organized. Just each person did pretty much what he wanted to do when he wanted to do it. We were working about four or five airlines in those days.

And for an example, one of our responsibilities was to take all the cabin bags aboard the aircraft. And this was done after all the passengers checked in. Seemingly there was only one class and that was first class. Not coach and first class they're having now. And it was our responsibility to take those handbags aboard and distribute it among the seats of the passengers because they all had the seat numbers. We would be sitting out front of the terminal and over the PA system they'd be paging for a porter to come, redcap to come or skycap, whatever, for cabin baggage, especially United Airlines. (And) each person (would) be looking at the other. "Well, I did it the other day," and passing the buck and that sort of thing. And I was the most conscientious one and I realized that "Hey, listen. This can't go on." So I'd go and do it. But I would tell a fellow worker, "I'll do it this time, even though I did it yesterday, I'll do it this time providing you do it the next time." The guy (would) agree to anything, as long as (he didn't have to) do it now. "I'll agree to that."

But I'd record this, and I'd record other things. And things that needed a record kept of. So Brazell would turn to me because he knew I kept a record of it. "Golden, what's this?" And I'd tell him. Eventually he decided, "Wait a minute. I'll put you in charge. You be my assistant." To help him out and things like that. And this was the role that I'd play (for) him until such time that he lost it. He lost the business because of taxes. But this was my beginning in the porter service field.

WN: How many people did he employ when you started?

EG: At the time I made the sixth and my buddy followed. There was seven including me. And (we would) rely pretty much on tips for the income because in those days. He was paying us seventy-five dollars a month. Well, seventy-five dollars a month was a far cry from what I had been earning in civil service, but the tips were enough to compensate.

WN: Now how did it work? Did Brazell have contracts with the airlines?

EG: He had a contract with the airlines. He had a contract with Northwest, Pan American, United, TPA, and there was a British airline. I forgot---a British airline and a Philippine airline, I think, were flying in those days. But I don't know what names they were operating under. I think there was a BOAC or something like that.

WN: BOAC, yeah.

EG: Whether it was BOAC at that time, I'm not sure, Warren. But it was a British carrier. So they contracted him, and he in turn would hire the people to do the work and supervised them. And we worked like the fire department---twenty-four hours on, twenty-four hours off. So it was work I liked. I liked it because we're working with people. It was never, never dull---never boring.

WN: What was a typical day? I mean were you always there? Did you go out of the airport at all?

EG: No, all of the activity was there. The terminal was about the size of one of the terminals, one of the many lobbies that they have at the main terminal now.

WN: Right. Well, this was the old airport . . .

EG: The old airport.

WN: Lagoon Drive, huh?

EG: Yeah. There was a big Quonset hut just as you entered the airport. That was the customs area. And then right next was a [baggage] claim area. And then the main terminal. All of the airlines' [ticket counters] were on one side---Diamond Head side---of (the) lobby. The lobby was open on both ends, a sort of open-air lobby. Our day would start, oh, let's see, on an average about six or seven o'clock in the morning. And flights were leaving, I think, around nine o'clock or so. Hawai'i was still a territory. Everyone had to go through immigration in order to leave.

WN: You mean just to go to the Mainland?

EG: Yeah. They had an immigration booth in the lobby. And all passengers leaving Hawai'i had to go through an immigration booth. Agriculture inspection. There was an agriculture counter there, a little counter inside the lobby just as you entered the lobby door. There were one or two shops. There was a curio shop. There was a flower shop.

WN: I think there was a restaurant there, right? The Sky . . .

EG: The restaurant. Yeah, the Skylane---no, not Skylane.

WN: It was Sky-something.

EG: It was Skyroom.

WN: Skyroom?

EG: The Skyroom. Yeah. It was connected to the main terminal because after you left the lobby going 'Ewa you went through (a section) where most of the airlines had offices and all the other offices. And then you went across the roadway or driveway and went in the next building where the Skyroom was. Short Snorter Bar was there also.

WN: What was that?

EG: Short Snorter Bar. That was owned by Spencecliff, I think. I think the restaurant was owned by Spencecliff also. The aircraft were on hardstand. When I first went there I think they were flying. . . . DC-4? I know later there came the DC-6. Aloha Airlines or TPA was flying DC-3s. Hawaiian Airlines was on the other side of the field. Pan American, United (was) flying DC-4. Then DC-6. And then later came the strato cruisers. You know, this was a double-decker. Still, I think, that was a prop driven. The DC-4, the DC-6, and later the DC-8 were all propeller driven. I think that the strato cruiser may have been a combination. But the strato cruiser was a big thing for a while there.

WN: Yeah. I've seen pictures of it.

EG: They had a lounge in the lower section of the aircraft. Pan American did. And Pan American was a big airline in those days. So a typical day would start out with us servicing the passengers that were departing around nine o'clock. And later we'd have some arrivals. Our day would end about noon and then another shift would start. Let's say my shift would start today at noon. Any flights that would arrive or depart between now and tomorrow noon my crew would be responsible for. And sometimes we'd have to go until the evening. I think some flights were (arriving) and departing late in the evening. But that was a typical day.

There was a pool system. In other words, whatever team was working together would pool their tips. The honor system had to prevail.

In those days, Hawai'i was beautiful. The aloha spirit existed. People would come to the airport and see the visitors off. They would shower them with leis. In other words, visitors came here then and they got the treatment. They'd go to the hotels. Hotels were just opening up after the war, right? Royal Hawaiian [Hotel] had lost its camouflage. They'd repainted it [back] to pink. The beach boys were reigning supreme at all the beaches at Waikīkī. The people lived at Waikīkī in those days. And that's one of the reasons why I feel that the aloha spirit is gone. You see, people could walk to work because they lived right there in Waikīkī. And a person would come here and get to know either some of the bellhops or some of the beach boys or some of their families. And when they'd leave they would be decked out with leis and some of the people would even be lucky enough to have a small troupe serenading them, you know, ukuleles [*ukuleles*] and guitars seeing them off. They enjoyed it. It was a beautiful thing. Hawai'i was beautiful then. Now, I don't know. They ruined it because they chased all the people out of Waikīkī. And the people now have to drive one hour (to) one hour and a half in bumper-to-bumper traffic to get (to work) to provide a service. So how can you have any aloha spirit under those conditions?

WN: I know like Moana Hotel had cottages there for employees and things like that.

EG: Yeah. On the mountain side of Kalākaua Avenue, between Kalākaua Avenue and Ala Wai Boulevard you had residential.

WN: Right.

EG: And most of those people who lived out in that area worked (in the) hotels and that made it ideal. That's what they should do now. We took pride in what we were doing because we spent some time with the passenger, talking with him. And he would always say he loves Hawai'i so much. And you'd inquire what he loved about it. And he'd say, "Well, the weather and the scenery." And I would always ask him, "What about the people?" Because if the people weren't beautiful the scenery and the weather would be meaningless. You would not remember any of that. And they would have second thoughts. They would have to say, "Yes, the people." Because the people were what made it. The people were what made Hawai'i. And they're about to lose it. They're going to lose it if they're not careful. We'll come up with something else to try to make do, but Hawai'i had three things to offer. They had sunshine which they're going to keep. Scenery, which they can keep most of. They're blocking a lot of it. And the aloha spirit. And the aloha spirit is gone. It's maintained a bit of it now because of the recession. Because of the recession it did not explode. If the recession hadn't come along you would find people not coming to Hawai'i because they say, "No, we don't want to go there." And I've seen it over the years coming about.

But that's another story. It's one of my favorite hang-up stories. One of my pet peeves is how people exploit a commodity. And then they spend all the amount of money in the world trying to (undo) what they have done. They did it in the South with the agrarian economy. And they did it in the North with industrial economy. People just rape whatever they. . . . In other words, get all you can today and the heck with tomorrow. And that's what they tried to do here. Because they had it. You know what they have? They have promotional things on the radio now saying, "Remember the aloha spirit?" and all that sort of stuff. Why do you have to remember it? If you got to remember something it means you no longer have it. And that's what they're doing now. They're up there trying to recapture it. And the only thing they have to do is stop pushing people off the land. They pushed them all out to Māhala and all out to Waimānalo and all out to Waialua. So now they don't have. . . . That's my soap box. (Chuckles)

WN: That's appropriate with all this politics involving the convention center.

EG: Well, it is. I'm glad you agree because this is what they're doing. It's exactly what they're doing. And some years ago, and this must have been the late seventies, the early eighties just before [Ronald] Reagan took over. You see, I've seen this tourist industry grow. I've been a part of it from right after the war until the present day, and I've been in the forefront. We're the gateway—the airport's a gateway. Like I said, in the fifties it was a beautiful time because the passengers—they weren't the numbers you have now—but the passengers who did come enjoyed what Hawai'i was. But in the early eighties, I have seen at this time that we're speaking of, cab drivers get out and punch passengers, okay? This sort of thing. This confrontation between the passengers and someone who's working in the industry was not unusual. It could be a cab driver. It could be a restaurant waiter. It could be anybody, okay? It could be an airline rep. It could be people who work in my particular field. But the reason for it was that the people had no relief from a constant bombardment of people. There was no getting away from it. It was almost like it was during the war. During the war you had wall-to-wall service personnel. During this period of time that I'm speaking of you had wall-to-wall tourists. And during the war, the people here—it was an emergency, and they made the most of a bad situation. During this time there (is) no need to make the most of a bad situation.

People didn't understand what was happening. You couldn't go to a movie. You couldn't go to a restaurant. You couldn't go anywhere. Churches may have been an exception. You couldn't go to the beach without tourists, okay? So all of a sudden, if you're going to have tourists with you twenty-four hours of the day, somewhere along the way you're going to say, "I want to get away from tourists for a while. I want to get away from a visitor." (If) you have a visitor in your home 365 days of the year. I don't care how close or how good a friend they are, you're going to say, "I wish you'd go home." But they couldn't say that. You see, they couldn't say that to the people so all they become is irritable. People at snack bars were telling tourists off. People at the information booth were saying, "Leave me alone." Airline people, "Give me a break." This is what they were saying. And I told some friends then. I said unless we're careful, this thing is going to blow up because we cannot continue this. You see, I drive on the roads from Lā'ie to town. A lot of traffic is on the road. Do you know that a lot of that traffic is not local traffic? A lot of that traffic is tourist traffic. And a lot of that traffic holds me up. And I cannot arrive here in a good frame of mind after I've been driving behind some guy who's staring at the ocean (WN laughs) for the past half hour driving at fifteen miles an hour, you see?

[Ronald] Reagan came in office and plunged the nation into a depression. And that's when the tourists stopped coming in. That let some of the pressure off. And then (the) people started smiling and saying, "Good morning," and meaning it. Before, you'd meet somebody at the airport and you don't think about saying, "Good morning." You don't think about saying anything, (but) "Get away." It's back again, this feeling of, "Eh, I like you. You're a fine person. There are not too many of you. There are enough of you that I can be pleasant to." Whoever's responsible for this ought to think (this thing) through. (But) they aren't thinking. They're just saying, "Look, there's money out here in this. Get it. Grab it."

And part of the reason for what happened during the period I'm talking about, there was a moratorium on building hotels in Waikīkī, based on a setback. I may not be using the right terminology for this to make my point, but if you had to go so high you had to have a certain amount of setback. And I think everyone rushed to build before this went into effect. Consequently you had an oversaturation of rooms in Waikīkī. And what did (they do) to fill these rooms? They started bringing in plane loads of tourists. This is when they started bringing in those big charters from the Mainland. And so instead of shooting for quality they started going for quantity. And the quantity almost blew it up. If the depression hadn't come along this place would have no longer been desirable because the tourists would not have wanted what they found. Okay, the second recession came along. This put a cap on everything. You go out to the airport now, you'll find people pleasant to the tourist.

Let prosperity come back. And unless they do something. . . . And the prosperity is coming back eventually. But you're going to find people saying, "I will not go to Hawai'i anymore because the people are rude." And no one will understand why. And the people who are rude are not by nature rude. So there's something causing them to be this way. And you can take the guy who used to be able to walk from somewhere off Kalākaua and walk to the Royal Hawaiian or walk to the Moana, now has to drive from Nānākuli in order to get there, or drive from Waimānalo to get there. And when he gets there he's had to spend a hour to an hour and fifteen minutes or so in order to do this. So he has already worked an hour and a half under pressure before he even punches the clock. So he's not going to be pleasant—he's not going to have the aloha spirit.

WN: Also, too, it works the other way too. Tourists have to learn or have come to demand more things and a certain kind of demeanor from the workers. So a lot of it, too, I think, is caused by tourists who are . . .

EG: Demanding? Far, far and in between. I don't skycap anymore, but every other Thursday I go out there, and I work in customs because I relieve one of my supervisors. We are servicing something on an average of about 6,000 passengers during the period of time that I'm talking about. And of those 6,000, if I run into (one or) two overly demanding, it's unusual. I find that people, in general, are good. The traveling public is good. It's just that they do expect, and rightfully so, they should expect courtesy. Just normal courtesy is to be expected. Rudeness should not be condoned under any circumstances.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 22-87-4-93 and 22-88-4-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ernest L. Golden (EG)

May 27, 1993

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Ernest Golden on May 27, 1993, and we're at his office in the airport industrial area in Honolulu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Ernest, let's get started again. Let me ask you about Hampton Brazell's Porter Services. Where did the other skycaps come from?

EG: Okay, he had five people before he employed this friend of mine and I. Some were merchant seamen who had gotten off the ship here in Honolulu. I think one or two people filled that category. I think one had come over as a civil service worker, same as I. I think also one of them had been in the [U.S.] Navy. Brazell came here about 1947 from San Francisco. Originally from Louisiana, he worked some time in San Francisco and then decided, for some reason, to come to Hawai'i to start a porter service over here. There was a Harry Williams, who had been, I think, a former war worker—a civil service worker. There was Prince Gary, whose background I'm not sure of. But there were two other people who were merchant seamen. And then there was this friend of mine, a man named Gilbert Cork. He and I were civil service workers. So that was the makeup.

WN: And they were all Black?

EG: All, yeah. Interestingly enough, I see a lot of different ethnic groups out there now. I think, it's good. But, in contrast, we were flunkies in those days. It was a flunky-type job. I think some of that still carries over now as far as the airport's concerned, and I'm pretty disenchanted with it. If something goes wrong, and it's almost a joke, but it's not really a joke—if something goes wrong as far as in a department, if the porters have anything to do with it then the porters are responsible. We play quite an important role as far as servicing the visitors. And yet when something comes up, we're the last ones to be considered, especially by the airports. Now the airlines take a more positive view toward our worth. But I have a strong feeling that the rest of them still look on it as a Black thing and still haven't gotten out of that mind-set. I'm a little bit *huhū* because of that.

WN: Now, Hampton Brazell was Black.

EG: Yes, Hampton Brazell was Black.

WN: Now, what about nationwide? Was portering in those days a Black . . .

EG: Nationwide, during those days, and I would dare say possibly up until the last—let's be generous and say twenty years, okay?—it was pretty much Black. Actually it started out with the railroad porters.

WN: I see.

EG: The railroad porters were Black. And then air travel. Then they brought it into this part of transportation, but it was Black. New York, had Black owners. San Francisco, Black owners. And some of the names I had heard of over the years that were pioneers in (this) particular field. Most of them, because of the arrangements between the carriers and the contractors, (failed). These [Black-owned] companies never survived. Most of them failed after years and years of operation. Brazell lost his because of taxes. A lot of the others lost theirs because of taxes. And some of them sort of evolved into this sort of business. And because it was an evolved process we often went into it undercapitalized. This is one of the main (reasons). We went into it undercapitalized. There was very little business know-how these people had. Brazell had little or no business training. He had initiative. Very intelligent man, but little or no education. I dare say he didn't have a high school education. I think I'm being generous when I say that. But I think like he and a lot of the others who started the business, they just sort of saw a need, fulfilled that need. Because it was not a business, as such, the source of income, even as it is today, was through gratuities or the tips. And I think a lot of them decided because of that I can earn a livelihood in something that I like doing and in an exciting type of work without being compensated in the usual manner—a salary and that sort of thing. I hesitate, but I want to think that I was one of the few that made a business of it. Just prior to my becoming one of the owners . . .

WN: This was in 1959?

EG: Nineteen fifty-nine. The decision to become an owner came about 1957. Up until that time I'd never considered being an owner of a company. But to do so I decided to get the necessary training. So this is when I enrolled in what was then Church College [of Hawai'i], (that) is now Brigham Young University[-Hawai'i]. It was a two-year school, and I went in for business administration. Studied corporate law. And in turn came back and started to incorporate. Up until then most of these companies would be single ownership. There's a term for it that I'm not using. You have partnerships, and then you have corporations. And then you have the . . .

WN: Sole proprietor.

EG: Sole proprietorship. That's the term I'm looking for. Most of them were sole proprietorships using the name of the person who was the proprietor. Brazell's Porter Service. Buck Jones' Porter Service. The contracts that existed between the carrier and the companies were through the individual. He was the key person, and this is who the contract was with.

WN: Now, did he pay salaries, too?

EG: Yes. We were getting, in the beginning, I think, seventy-five dollars a month, which was peanuts. But the airlines said, look, we will give you so much a month to provide this

service. The airlines removed themselves from any liability, and it was up to this individual to hire his people. He was the contractor, but it was all slanted very much in favor of the carrier.

I may have been one of the first to start the corporate thing here—when I say “here” I mean continental United States. (In) 1976, a porter service [organization] (was) formed—called NASCAP [National Association of Skycaps]. And it was at that time that I got to meet, at a convention of this organization, owners from throughout the continental United States. So I’m speaking from firsthand knowledge. There was a similarity in the organizations themselves because we were all doing the same thing, but I think very few of them. This friend of mine in Seattle, Bob Matkin, had a very sophisticated service, but I don’t think he incorporated either. Bob was a very successful operator. He had everything as far as these type of services are concerned, except for catering service and an airplane. He was doing fueling. He was doing the skycaps. All this evolved out of his porter service, and then he (developed) several other services.

WN: Is there a difference between porter and skycap?

EG: They’re interchangeable. At first, they were [called] porters, then redcaps, then skycaps. I coined the phrase skycap here in Hawai‘i. Brazell’s Porter Service, when I first started working for him, everyone was calling us redcaps. I think we were wearing red caps. And I decided at that time (that) this was different. It was related to (aircraft). So why not call it skycap? So I’m certain unless someone comes up and challenges this. If they come up and challenge it I think we can debate it. (WN laughs.) I would debate that I coined the phrase skycap here in the State of Hawai‘i.

But the corporate thing that was formed here for the first time, I’m sure that I was responsible for that. The one that I did form, the first one, was not acceptable to the person who had the authority to give us the contract. So, in turn, in a very subtle way, he directed that I form a corporation with the former owner. Now, (here is) what happened: Brazell had lost his business because of taxes [in 1955]. And then the [airline] carriers had taken this contract from him and decided to give it to an ex-policeman named Bill Smith. Bill Smith had been an airport policeman. On his retirement (from the police department) they gave it to Bill Smith. And Bill Smith let me run all of the operations for him. Smith kept it for about two or three years.

WN: From ‘55, huh? Fifty-five to ‘58.

EG: Was it? Yeah, somewhere around there.

WN: Ownership went from Brazell to Smith.

EG: To Smith. And Smith called it Smith’s Porter Service, I think.

WN: And were all of you retained?

EG: Yes. But when I was working for Brazell, I had the responsibility, but not the title that goes with supervising. With Bill Smith I had the responsibility plus he gave me the title. At that time, I became supervisor under Smith. Smith lost it because he signed (a) union contract that the airlines would not support him in. So at that time they took the contract from Smith

because when he signed the union contract, committing himself to pay out more than the airlines were willing to give him. You see, the airlines had (a) fixed amount that they were paying the porter companies. So Smith committed himself (to) the union—he was naive to do so—for more than he was receiving. So the airlines said, “Look, we won’t pay this amount so you don’t have a contract.” So that left (Smith) without a contract.

WN: This would be a union for the skycaps . . .

EG: The skycaps, yes.

WN: I see. What union was this?

EG: Ah, Warren, I think I want to say the brotherhood of the railway. It was the brotherhood of something.

WN: We’ll look it up.

EG: Okay. But it was related to the aircraft, to the travel industry, somehow or another, but I’ve forgotten the title. [Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employees.]

WN: This is a national union, not a local?

EG: Yeah. I think it came under the umbrella of AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations].

WN: Was it [International Brotherhood of] Teamsters?

EG: No, it wasn’t Teamsters. I got to know the head man [i.e., president of the skycap union]. His last name was (Reiley). Very nice guy. He and I got to be very close friends. But Bill Smith lost it because of that. And at that time no company existed, so (we) were out of work.

WN: You too?

EG: All of us. When I came to work that afternoon, the guys said, “Hey, listen. We don’t have a job so I think you’d better go in and talk with the airline representative, who acted as a liaison between the airlines and the porter company. And so I walked in to see this man, and he explained what had happened. He said, “Well, look. As of now you people don’t have a job.” This man’s name was Frank Taylor, and he was station manager for Northwest Airlines. We had a very good relationship with him. And he said, “Well, listen. What you can do is you can apply for it.” Because of conflict of interest, he could only suggest certain things. So he said, “I suggest that you do one of two things, and that is you apply for it yourself or that you form a corporation and apply for it.” So with that I went and formed a corporation with Brazell, who had given me a job, and also another person who was my right hand. You know, you always need somebody to watch your back, and this man was very good at it. I’d known him for a number of years, and his name was James Smith. So I formed a corporation with the three of us. Took it back to Taylor, and he rejected it. He said it wasn’t strong enough, that the porter company was a growth industry. In other words, it’s going to become a big industry. His foresight bore fruit.

So he said, "I recommend"—again recommendation—"that you form a corporation consisting of Bill Smith," grandfathered him in, "Paul Leong," L-E-O-N-G, Paul Leong, "because you need. . . . He's an accountant." Leong had been Bill Smith's accountant. And Leong was good at his business. "So I suggest him because you're going to need an accountant in this thing to keep you out of trouble. And you. But whatever corporation is formed, the stipulation is that you are the operations manager." So I went to Leong at this time, and he agreed to that sort of arrangement. He set up the corporation with him as president, I as vice-president/treasurer and later appointed general manager. Smith as secretary.

WN: This is back in '59, right, when you . . .

EG: Yeah. It was '59.

WN: Yeah, okay.

EG: So that was the beginning of Honolulu Airport Porter Service, Inc.

WN: General manager, right? That's what you were.

EG: Right.

WN: I see.

EG: So that was the beginning of, to my way of thinking, a very successful company. Leong with his background—businessman and accountant—made it into a business. Up until that time it had just been sort of going along. But it became a business. And he [Leong] was able to negotiate with the carriers. He and I worked very well together. We had some differences at one time, but when these differences were ironed out, he and I became a very good team. That team existed until 1974 when I decided to resign—to retire and leave the state.

WN: So when Honolulu Airport Porter Services was started back in '59, the gist of it was really the ability to get contracts with the airlines. Is that basically the gist of how this business works? The ability to get contracts with airlines and then . . .

EG: At that time there was no competition.

WN: Oh, okay, that was the only one there.

EG: Yes. The only thing we had to do was put together the right package to provide the services for the airlines. And at this time, I think, the airlines that existed may have been, oh, about five or six. I know there was Northwest. Pan American was the big one at that time. United was there. There was a Philippine airlines carrier and a British carrier. I think there was a Canadian carrier.

WN: What about Japanese?

EG: No. No Japanese airline.

WN: This is still at the old airport?

EG: This is the old airport. And Aloha Airlines was just getting started at that time. So those were the carriers there. And once you put together the right combination that was acceptable to the carriers—to the airlines—they said, “Okay, fine. You are qualified to do the job.” There was no question about the people who were doing the work because all of us were retained by each change. Brazell started it, and then Smith kept us. And then when this corporation was formed. So you had the same people doing the work. So the airlines had confidence in the people who were doing the work. It was just the administrative part that had to be directed and coordinated. This is where Paul came in with his business know-how. He made it have credibility, something that the airlines could respect because it was handled in a businesslike manner. And this continued without competition. At that time no one was interested in it. Remember, I said that it was a flunky thing in the first place. We were making money and everybody was looking at us as being flunkies, and we were laughing all the way to the bank (laughs), you know.

WN: When you talk about a package, okay, what kind of. . . . What do you mean by a package in terms of services for an airline?

EG: Well, at that time our responsibilities were simple. To assist passengers in checking in. Make sure their carry-on bags were placed at the seat, that sort of thing. This was departing passengers, and to meet the arriving passengers and assist them. So primarily that's all we did. It's quite a bit more involved now, however, we still have possibly three key services to provide. Priority number one would be assisting the handicapped with their wheelchair needs and then their travel needs. The second would be any baggage services that may be needed as far as the carousels are concerned. And then third is assisting the passengers with their check-in and their arrival needs. And this has become third now because of other means of self service, especially smart carts. So anything else sort of dovetails into these three major services that we provide.

WN: So does self-service technology, so to speak, hurt your business?

EG: Yes it did. They stopped any growth for a period of time. Those carts came in after I came back from the Mainland [in 1976]. Prior to my retirement, we had the state. We had this island. We had Kaua'i. We had the Big Island and Maui. At that time we had something like 110 employees. Without the carts this expansion would've continued with the growth of airlines coming into the airport. I dare say that (it) would've doubled. But after I came back in '76, and the carts must've started sometime after I came back, and this stopped any growth for a while.

The economy now is retarding the growth somewhat. But there are other changes that have taken place now, so I can see where the growth will start again or has started, because (of) some of the services that we are now providing. And the computer is playing a role in that also because we can now check your baggage. You present your ticket and we can tag your bags with a piece of equipment that will write out your claim checks to your final destination. And this does require quite a bit more skill than what it was when I first started with the porter services. So this has caused growth. And (the) smart carts, you can get so many before they start crowding out the areas that they are supposed to provide equipment for. In other words, if our passenger traffic increases, you cannot have enough carts out there to provide one for each (passenger) because there's no space for them. So a limit (will be reached) where the smart cart has to sort of stop. So this allows for more growth, allows for expansion. I've

looked at it on some other stations on the Mainland, and the smart carts play a much lesser role there than they do here for some reason. I haven't been able to analyze it to really see and I think I should. I see a lot of stations where you hardly see any use at all of the smart carts, not as much as it is here. So I have hope that eventually we will reach that point where the smart carts are not taking away [business].

The [Hawai'i State] Department of Transportation gave us no consideration whatsoever when they decided to bring smart carts in. We tried to provide a quality-type service here. There are always exceptions (to) everything. But the (porter) companies, by and large, wanted to provide a quality service for this industry, wanted to see the travel industry, the business industry here grow in the state of Hawai'i. You would think that when they decided to bring in that sort of service—if you want to call it that—that was going to put a lot of people out of work, (they) would have been a little more considerate in how it was to be done. To have consulted with those of us who (are) in the field. To see what impact it was going to have on the (skycaps). But none of this was done. There was no consideration. And it could have been a blend of the two. It could have complemented each other if some consideration had been given. But they brought the things in. They put them right on the curb, right where the (skycaps) were earning their livelihood with no thought as to what impact it was going to have on (the skycaps) and their families. I think it's a gross oversight on the part of those people who make decisions. And they may criticize me for it, but I would discuss it with them because they were derelict in (not) taking under consideration these people who have families.

WN: What about the airlines? Did they support these smart carts because, you know . . .

EG: The airlines supported it because the airlines pay to have skycaps available to assist their passengers. It's minimum wage. In other words, the airlines say, "Look, I pay x amount of dollars for you to stand on the curb and be available to assist those passengers who are traveling on my carrier that might want it. And regardless of whether they accept that service or not, the fee is still the same." And that's a good argument. And I say this now with tongue-in-cheek with a certain amount of reservation, because of the state of the economy, I think that the carriers are doing about as well as they could. When things were better, when the economy was good, I think that the minimum wage may have been a little low. And I'm saying (this) because of the interest that those of us who work with the people, the interest we have in the welfare of the (traveling public), in the image that we have as far as the airlines are concerned. How we represent them, how we service their passengers. And I think that because we are interested in them we possibly do a better job than some of the people who work directly for the carrier.

We are very close to the carrier, yet we're like a stepchild, as opposed to the [airline] employees. Now this existed for a long time but then all of a sudden, even those people who are employed by the airlines were sort of cast aside. Quantas, for example, got rid of their passenger service. But we, the porters, were always considered a stepchild. You're within the family but yet you were not. I've always felt like the stepchild. I tried to provide a quality-type service. I took an interest in the passengers boarding an aircraft. If he was irate when he arrived at the airport, I took pride and saw that that passenger, when he walked to the ticket agent, his whole attitude had changed because I did everything within my means to make his departure pleasant. And I know that others have done the same thing. So to take this much interest and to still be denied [discount] air travel, for one thing, and. . . . This may be the

reason why they have these contracts. But I often felt like a stepchild. And I think some of my people feel the same way although we are now becoming closer. We have a very close relationship now with the carriers that I provide a service for. And I have found the people that I deal with now have a greater appreciation for the services that we render. And they are not stingy with saying this. I provide (service to) two carriers now, and they both give verbally the appreciation that I think we deserve. And it's a good feeling.

WN: How has competition affected---I mean, you said from '59 to '74 you were the only game in town.

EG: Yes.

WN: And after you came back from Athens in '76, was that the point where competition started coming in?

EG: It started just before I came back. During the time that I was gone, I think just before I came back, United [Airlines] decided to pull out of what was called the porter pool. At the time that I was here, whatever new carrier came in they went into this pool arrangement where they jointly shared the cost of the skycap services. I'm using interchangeably skycap and porter so just realize it means one and the same thing.

WN: Mm hmm.

EG: They jointly shared the cost on a pro rata basis. And the expectation was that each would, because of cost, willingly go into this arrangement although each one had the right to pull out of this system by giving a thirty-day notice. And it was just before I came back, I think, that United decided to exercise this right. United being (then) and still is one of the biggest carriers there. So in early '76 they did pull out. This started the downfall or the penetration of what had been an exclusive. Then in the early eighties the economy took a downturn, and the transportation system—air transportation—started suffering because of it. And they started being very, very selective. They started to cut costs, and in order to cut costs they started seeking any means whatsoever, sources where they could cut costs. And porter services was one of them. The company, Honolulu Airport Porter Service, did not, upon request from the carriers, reduce its cost. It caused some of the carriers to seek lower contractual costs from others. By this time, trucking companies and tour companies realized how lucrative this business had become. So the outcome of that was that these people started forming porter (companies).

Also, some of the security companies started looking at this as a source of diversification, and a lot of them went into the porter service business. A lot of them had been approached by some of the carriers who were seeking less expensive contracts. I do know that one of the security guard companies did this in order to fortify their security business. "We'll take on the porter services almost for nothing." So this then had opened up the door for many, many other outfits to come in. Also, there's always someone who is within a company who decides, "Hey, look. I'll start my own." And one of our employees did this with the interisland carriers. So that sort of just made *pukas* in the whole system.

WN: What about the [Hawai'i State] Department of Transportation? Was there any kind of regulation in terms of airport contracts?

EG: For a long time, the department of transportation left it up to the carriers because we were contracting with the carriers. The department of transportation for many years did not take an active role in regulating it. I guess as growth came about they decided there was a need to do so. And they have now, so they did start taking a more direct hand in it, regulating the companies. Because there was the impression that anyone could come out with a cart and just go out to the airport and start carrying bags. And this (did) happen. So this may have been (why) the department of transportation stepped in and said, "We can't just have every Tom, Dick, and Harry taking a cart and coming in," because there was no control. And the impression of a lot of people was that, "Look, this isn't a regulated business. Anybody can go out with a cart and carry some bags and get some tips." So the department of transportation did step in and start regulating it and I would say, overall, they've done a good job. I think it could've been done much faster if they had just talked with those of us who knew what was going on. But they decided against that. So they eventually evolved in something that's workable.

WN: Let me turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, backing up just a little bit into the old days with sole proprietorships and Hampton Brazell and so forth. Would you say that back then the business thrived mainly on the charisma or the drive of one single individual?

EG: Yes. Yes, it did.

WN: In other words, you contributed to this change in getting it more into business-type incorporation.

EG: Yes. It was the charisma and the personality of the individual. To some degree it still is even with the corporation. You still have that one individual. I am now that person with the two carriers that I am providing the services for. However, I am trying to be farsighted enough so that if something happens to me that the whole thing doesn't come crashing down around twenty-six other people. So I've got to move some other people to the forefront. I (have) three people now that I'm training, grooming and moving into the forefront so that just in—heck, I'm not going to be here forever—so that it will carry on.

WN: To what extent is portering or skycapping still a Black occupation?

EG: In Hawai'i, no. It's no longer so. I would say nationwide it's no longer a Black thing. This is a very. . . . I don't know, how do I say this? There is still sort of a undercurrent thinking that it is a Black thing. And there was some discussion about this very recently with some of the United [Airlines] skycaps. United has just dissolved the skycap services, and they did this the 1st of March. But I was discussing it with some of their skycaps and the underlying feeling (is) that it's still a Black thing, but yet it's no longer being done exclusively by Blacks. I'm using a lot of "I's" in this, but I was the first to hire a non-Black at Honolulu

International Airport. I hired for the first time a Filipino kid, young man, whose stepfather was Black. And he had all of the (characteristics), except the physical ones, of the Afro-American because he talked the part, he walked the part, okay? So he was among my people. And I had to tactfully do it because I didn't want the resistance to him but yet I wanted to do it. So I had to pick this young man to be the first one to open it up. And he was so Black in his overall outlook and everything that he was among them, and they didn't know for a long time that we had been integrated. I've forgotten what year. I was also the first one to hire a girl as a skycap. I don't know, if I went back to the records, it may have been the first girl hired in (a) skycap company. I'd have to go and look—I don't have anything to support this now. Other companies throughout the nation may have had it mixed, but I was close to the first as far as integrating the porter services. Right now it's very much integrated. Some companies even now have token Blacks (WN laughs). Believe it or not.

WN: Back in the Brazell days, was Brazell common in terms of a Black owner-proprietor? In other words, in the early days, were there White proprietors? Owners?

EG: In this business?

WN: Yeah.

EG: None that I know of. Most of the information I got in those days came from and through Brazell. And he knew the bigger companies. And I can safely say back in those days, no.

WN: What about Bill Smith? Bill Smith was *Haole* . . .

EG: Bill Smith was part-Hawaiian.

WN: Right.

EG: Part-Hawaiian. I don't know. Maybe Hawaiian-*Haole*. Bill Smith was possibly one of the first—among the first—non-Blacks to get into the business. I don't say he was the first, but he was somewhere near that.

WN: Okay. Well, let's change course a little bit. You said you resigned from Honolulu Airport Porter Service in '74.

EG: Yes.

WN: What did you do?

EG: I went to the Mainland. I went to Athens. And went into business there. Not the business that I had left (here) to go into. For years, I guess, I had an idea. I bought some property back in Athens and I wanted to open up an outdoor recreation place that was near town, and this is what I left here to do. (But) I didn't go through with that idea. I had studied it from every angle, from a financial angle, which was a (last) thing that I did. I'd taken several trips back there, and, sometime around '73, about a year or so before I decided to go back, I had looked at it from a financial—this venture that I was talking about—I looked at it from a financial point of view, if you want to use (the) term. How much it would cost to put it together and came back and felt that I had enough money to put the venture over. I had the land. But the

oil embargo went into effect in '73.

WN: Correct.

EG: And all of my planning, when I got back there in '74, the money that I had allocated was only about half the amount necessary to do the job. Because of the oil embargo, everything became inflated. And what I had thought I could do with the money that I had, cost me twice as much. So I had to (rethink) the overall (idea) and then saw something else that I got involved in that I possibly shouldn't have, with hindsight. But I opened a supper club. I bought a supper club and stayed with this for about a year and four months.

Now let me go back and explain to you what happened. While I was working on this project, and I was having this place bulldozed and the, you know, when you put in the roads and the electrical work and that sort of thing? (There were) thirty-four acres and I was going to have roadways put in. In other words, the foundation [i.e., infrastructure] work was in progress. And I decided to go to work because all the money was going out and nothing was coming in. So I went to the airport and talked with the commissioner. A man named J. B. Giles who was head of the airport. I've forgotten his title. But to make a long story short, he gave me a job driving a limousine from Athens to Atlanta. And I would do this every day. When I came back from Atlanta, once in a while, I'd stop off at Ramada Inn after the day's work and have a relaxing drink at the lounge there. And one evening I'm sitting at the lounge and struck up a conversation with a *Haole* guy who's sitting there and we started a conversation and eventually we, I guess, went from one lounge to another. He had been out of town. We'd both been there when things were—racially speaking—were very bad and, I guess, this was part of our conversation. But we had gone to several different places. But I made the statement, I guess, later in the evening, "Hey, listen. We've gone to all of these places, and they've all been White-owned. Why don't we go to one that's Black-owned?" So we did, a place that I knew, we went there. And they would permit me but would deny him entry. And this upset me something terrible. This was just prejudice. Regardless of where it comes from, it was still prejudice.

And I guess from that moment on I decided I would open up a place where anybody could come. So I set out to do that, to open a lounge. I had owned a lounge here, and I decided to open up a small lounge in downtown Athens that would seat about sixty people, a piano bar, that sort of thing, for what I called mature people. It didn't make any difference what color you were. As long as you're mature, you'd be welcome. There was a friend of mine, a *Haole* guy, in Athens. He's dead (now). His name (was) Dean Beachum. And Dean used to meet me each time I'd come into Athens, and we'd have lunch together. And I was explaining to him this idea that I had. And he introduced me to another person who owned a hotel downtown, a hotel that I used to work in as a bellhop. A (man) named Sandy Butler. Sandy Butler owned the Georgian Hotel. So Dean introduced me to Sandy, and we talked this concept over, and they seemed to think, hey, this is a wild idea. The very idea of a place that would provide this sort of atmosphere for both Black and White, I think, was something that we all wanted to see. So with that, I looked at a place at Sandy's hotel, and I saw what I wanted. And we shook hands on it. No contract was signed. This was the first part of the week. This was a small place. I was looking for a small place. Cozy and intimate.

About the end of the week, though, my daughter who was with me—my daughter and my youngest son—(when) I got back to the apartment, told that me someone named Sandy had

called me up and wanted to talk with me. So we met. He said, "Listen. Get in the car. I want to show you something." So we were driving out of town, and I was thinking negative thoughts that, "Hey, look. You've had second thoughts about me going into your building. And I know what you're doing now. You're going to take me somewhere out here." And I wasn't interested. But he drove about four miles out of town. And he had the keys to what had once been a schoolhouse. It was a red-brick building. It was a schoolhouse that had been converted into a private club. Beautiful, a beautiful thing—very well done. And he said his idea was that he and I would run this thing together with the idea that I had. A very workable concept. A very workable (idea) because the two of us, with his connections (with) the White community and my know-how and feeling toward people, in general, it would've worked. The place would've accommodated—we could seat 200 in the ballroom. There was a cocktail lounge that would seat 60. There was a restaurant that would provide seating for about 40. There was a game room. There was a small apartment in the building. It was four acres of ground with a duplex on it. And there was two acres of blacktop parking. Four miles from downtown. [Being] from Hawai'i it was impressive. I mean the real estate itself was impressive.

WN: This was offered to you for sale?

EG: Sandy said "Listen, we can get this. They're asking \$175,000 for it." Remember, when I was trying to put together this recreation (project) I had looked at a clubhouse, and the clubhouse that I had looked at was going to cost me around—it was A-framed—around \$60,000 when I first looked at it, (now the cost) had doubled. The clubhouse itself. The clubhouse itself was going to cost as much as this whole thing we were looking at. So I was very much interested. But I went to my attorney there. And he explained to me that Sandy had a record and that he could not, because of Georgia law, go into a corporation with me of this nature. And I better take a second look at him as a partner. So Sandy and I had a conference and he admitted to something that would prevent him from going into it with me. So he backed out. We had to sever our relationship.

But then I'm looking at the real estate by now. And I'm saying that, for this I'll make an offer. The real estate alone. I've got to be able to make it, right? So I made them an offer of \$100,000, thinking they wouldn't accept it. They accepted the offer. Now I am the owner of a club. And I proceeded to get going. Advertised heavily. Went to bartending school so I could have some knowledge. Hired eight waitresses—four Black, four White. One idea was to capitalize on the clientele of a ratio that I felt—that the ratio of Black to White in Athens was about five to one, I think. And I wanted this ratio within the club.

WN: Five to one, Blacks to White?

EG: Whites to Blacks.

WN: Whites to Blacks.

EG: So this is what I set out. I set out to try to get five Whites for every Black in the club. This would have been a good ratio. To do that I wanted any White who walked in there to feel comfortable. So in turn, the bartenders, I had a male and female. They were both White. The waitresses—this was for the evening operations—I had four Whites and four Black girls, all very attractive. I called the place the Hawaiian *Hale*. And I dressed the girls in sarongs. I had

visible a security guard. All he did was walk around just so people could see him. This was to prevent---in that part of the country it was standard thing to fight. They'd just fight, and I didn't want this sort of thing there. So the security guard was visible to prevent that. I hired a hostess to seat people and to greet them when they walked in the door. I hired a Spanish (musical) group to play in the afternoons---trio. They played sort of a Spanish-type music. I hired a house band to play in the evenings from about nine o'clock. One of my stipulations was that the music would be so that you could converse without being blasted out. This was one of the causes of my downfall. The music was soft enough, subdued enough, but it was all soul. And after a while the White men were not dancing because the Blacks would get on the floor and just sort of overshadow them. And so pretty soon the ratio that I had wanted had reversed itself. Instead of five Whites to every Black, I was getting five Blacks to every White.

And it's a funny thing about that community and a lot of communities throughout the country. We as Blacks want to go out Friday and Saturday. White people will go out in the afternoon for that happy hour. They'll go out about four o'clock and some of them will stay on until the evening. Blacks come out around six---no, about ten o'clock at night. And there was a law that said that on a Sunday you closed at midnight---all drinks had to be off the table at midnight. And most of us went out---most Blacks came out at ten o'clock. My place would be empty. I'd open at four o'clock, and I'd have a full house at ten o'clock. But up until ten o'clock I'd have very few. Now I've got two hours in order to make my money. Pretty much, I think, was one o'clock [in the morning] on a Friday. So this was part of the downfall. The club did some wonderful things. A beautiful atmosphere. I had a following that would have been enough for me to be successful had I gone downtown in that small intimate club, but this was much too big for the following that I had. I succeeded in bringing together the two groups with no friction, and they socialized together, something that I think they both wanted to do but no one had ever set that sort of facility, made it available for them to do so. Later on, it became pretty much commonplace in Athens for the two races to mix. They do so quite well now.

I have to share this with you. Some wonderful things happened out of that club, though. I had to change the direction since I was unable to capture the audience or the clientele that I had wanted. And it almost became the (country) club for Blacks in the community. One that they could take pride in, and they did. I would allow social clubs to meet there. We formed a civic club that started in June of '74, I think, with about six of us. By October of '74, we had seventy-five-plus members. And it only started out with an idea that I had to give membership to my best customers. And this was to allow them to come in and run a tab and cash checks and that sort of thing. So I gave them a card. But it evolved into a social club---a civic club. And the makeup was educators, businessmen, policemen, politicians, all the business people of Athens---all the businessmen of Athens and some women---came together in this club.

We had a cultural thing going, a Black cultural thing going one Sunday in that ballroom. We must've had 300 people. It was packed for a cultural show we were putting on. You weren't supposed to be open at all on a Sunday. I was living in the duplex on the property. And when I came to the club, a lot of people were there---the police (came) and said, "Look. Mr. Golden, you're open on a Sunday."

And I said, "Yes, but we're not serving any booze." I made sure that no liquor was being served. We had grandmothers and small children and babes-in-arms. The Black in Athens had

never had this. There was Athens Country Club—Whites only, okay? No Blacks were allowed in there. In here, this place, was one that Black Athenians could take pride in. And the grandmothers and all these children and young people, all meeting on a Sunday afternoon. And in a very wholesome atmosphere.

And so the policemen said, "Well, look. You've got to close. You know you can't stay open."

He was looking and I took him inside the lounge, and I said, "The lounge is closed." And I showed him the only thing we were serving was refreshments and it was soda and stuff like that. And these weren't being sold.

So he said, "I don't see (anything) wrong. You just can't be open."

I said, "Well, you have to go in and tell them to close up."

And he said, "You have to tell them." (Laughs) So he called downtown. But what was happening was that I had several city councilmen (laughs) (and) policemen in there, and all of a sudden they came together and said "Listen, we aren't going to close this thing up." So they kept it open. The police didn't know what the heck to do.

WN: What was the law? It was no liquor served on Sunday?

EG: No, no. For some reason you could not open up a club on a Sunday. You weren't supposed to open your doors on a Sunday.

WN: A restaurant could.

EG: A restaurant could. But you couldn't. We were borderline, right?

WN: Yeah.

EG: We were borderline. And, I supposed, it caused some frustration. Anyway, to keep from dragging us out, the commissioners met, possibly the next day or the next Monday. And by this time the (councilmen) had started their telephone network, calling up the county commissioners getting some allies (for) support and everything like that. We met at the hearing. By this time the place was blanketed, though, with Blacks. The place was full. And I remember one of the county commissioners said, "Mr. Golden, we didn't expect you to bring out the big guns," because the place was full. They'd never been that full before. The outcome was that two or three of them said that what I was doing was what was needed, that Blacks in the community did not have a country club where they could socialize on a Sunday afternoon and the Whites did. And that instead of criticizing, chastising me for it, I should be encouraged. However, it was against the law, and I was not to do it again. And (that) was the outcome. That was one of the exciting highlights of that thing.

The other one, which was much more of a positive nature, the police department was integrated. But there was some police brutality going on, and it was directed at both Black and White. And somehow or another, through this civic group, there was an investigation of police brutality. And it was found that it did exist. There was one lady—she was White. (Her)

son attended University of Georgia. She was out of Atlanta, and she appealed to our group to check into brutality her son had been exposed to. There were others who came forward and said, "Look, there's brutality here and these are some cases." We took it to city hall, and again, there was a mass turnout. This was a meeting before the city council. I'm sure that the mayor was there. The outcome of that, there was an investigation of the police department. There was something like four, I'm sure, four policemen and maybe more. I think one or two were discharged because of this. One or two were given some other sort of penalty. But there was action taken that was all because of the Hawaiian *Hale* social club. These things make me feel that the whole thing was worthwhile. But I could only last so long because my money had run out. So I had to close and leave.

WN: So within about a year and a half.

EG: Yeah, about a year and four months I was there. But a lot of good things happened. A lot of good things. Made a lot of wonderful friends and accomplished one of the goals that I had wanted to. But I had to leave.

WN: So at that time [1976] you came back to Hawai'i?

EG: Yes.

WN: How did you feel about coming back?

EG: Glad that I had something to come back to. (Chuckles) My wife, I'm sure, felt---I felt good that I had something to come back to. There was a fear that---because we. . . . During the latter weeks and months after, when things had gone sour there, we didn't know where we were going to go and what we were going to do. And employment in Athens wasn't something that could sustain my family and I in the style that we had been accustomed. So this was a fear on my part. I called up Paul Leong and requested employment, and he was generous enough to offer me a job. But he offered me a little bit more. All I wanted was a job because I knew once I got back here I could start (over). This was the main thing, come back and get a (new) start. I knew I could do it in the skycap field because I knew it well. So I asked him for a job. He gave me a supervisory position.

WN: That is in '76?

EG: Seventy-six. So that's when I started back with Honolulu Airport Porter Service.

WN: Seems like you look at those two years in Athens with some measure of fondness, then. Is that something that you would have wanted to continue?

EG: What I was doing there?

WN: Mm hmm.

EG: If I had been able to survive I would have wanted to stay there. Athens is a fine place. My daughter and I have talked about it. I read somewhere where the successful person is one with tenacity. Maybe it takes one more step. Turn the screw just a half turn (more), may be the (key to) success. We had survival potential. We could have gone into the catering field. And

this would have sustained us because it would have given us enough diversity so that I would have been able to ride the slump. We had the kitchen facilities. We had everything to work with. And we could've given them something different because my wife was quite good at this sort of thing. She and I together did catering for private parties there within the lounge itself. But we could've extended this out to the community, and we didn't. I didn't see it at that time. Why, I don't know. There were one or two other things I could've done to sustain myself. I needed to sort of tighten the belt and then ride the economic slump that existed in those days. Hindsight.

But it was an interesting time for me. It was going back to my origin, to where I came from, and doing something. And I sort of made a mark, I guess. I cannot see going through life and someone not saying, "Here are some tracks left by Golden." It's my ego, I guess. I wanted to see a building down here with my name somewhere on it. That's another part of ego trip, huh? But, yes, Athens, that year and four months. I think the (last) four months or so was rather difficult. But the first year was satisfying. It was something that satisfied a need. And the club itself was appreciated by the Athenians, but I didn't get the support from some of the areas that I thought I would have. And I've always maintained that---you strive for excellency. You strive for the best. And it was one of the best in town. It wasn't one of the best Black clubs in town. It was one of the best clubs in town. And this is what I like. I don't like being the best Black this or the best Black that unless there's no other out there. But if there's anything else out there and it's better, then that's what I strive for. And this was on par with the best. And it's a great consolation to me.

WN: So the club was closed. You didn't pass it on to somebody else or . . .

EG: No. The fellow who had the house band that I hired was financially. . . . I needed money, and he was in a position to let me have some money, so I turned the club over to him. And he still has it. I think he's leased it out. (He is) not running (it) the way we did it. So he's successful and I was a failure, in a sense.

WN: Okay, well, in '76 you came back to Hawai'i. You started again with Honolulu Airport Porter Service. You were in a supervisory position. Then in '81 you started Versatile Services, [Inc.].

EG: Yes, I incorporated Versatile Services in October of 1980. Again, I'd had another idea, another dream, if you want to call it that. I was the first to operate a storage facility (in 1951 or 1952) in the state at the old airport. What happened? Pan American had a need for their passengers to have a storage facility. They, in turn, erected a building, erected a room over there right near the claim area at John Rodgers Airport. So they had the space. No one to run it. No one wanted it. I went to them, and they turned it over to me. So I ran the first baggage storage facility that I know of in the state. And I ran it successfully until they decided to move to the new (terminal) [i.e., Honolulu International Airport, built in 1962] over here. You would think that the [Hawai'i State] Department of Transportation would have said, "Hey Golden, you're the first one. Why don't you consider doing it over here?" They never mentioned anything at all to me. They started their own storage room, and they put somebody else in charge of it.

WN: You're talking about when they opened the new airport [in 1962]?

EG: When they opened the new airport.

WN: So this is way back, huh?

EG: Yes, everybody else that (had something at the old) terminal came over here with something. But, I guess, by this time they felt that the storage facility was too big for me to operate. I don't know, but they didn't ask me if I wanted it. They didn't give me an opportunity to bid on it. And they decided to go into the business themselves. The [Hawai'i State] Department of Transportation (will) probably chase me out of the state, but I'm going to say this: they should not be in the business in the first place. This is private enterprise. They are landlords. And right now they've got the biggest baggage-storage thing anywhere in the state. But this idea of mine was to open up a storage facility. The idea came from the evolving (of) one type of business to another. Now, those of us who have owned porter services—when we decided to—and I'm using (the) general "we"—when we decided to (retire from porter services), for some reason or another, we have gone into other fields that we knew little or nothing about. For example, a policeman, once he leaves the police department, would go into the private detective agency. He will go into a security guard system. We go into (laughs) the bar business. We buy liquor stores, and we open up cocktail lounges. I know the reason for it is because skycaps spend a lot of time in bars they have ready cash and they're looking at the bartender and saying, "Hey look. This guy is making a lot of money." They (do not) realize that the skycap is his best customer. So they feel, "Hey look, this is a lucrative business." No knowledge whatsoever of the bar business, and it's a very difficult business.

So I wanted one that was a smooth transition into a field that I knew something about—that skycaps knew something about. So over a period of time I started on this idea around '78 or before that—of looking at what would it be. And at the time that I was looking at the storage facility at the airport, number one, I have firsthand knowledge that the airport did not want it. They had never offered it to me. They had offered it to somebody else but they never came around to Golden and say, "Listen. Would you be interested in taking over this thing?" But they wanted to get out of the business because they were losing money at it. Or it was costing more to operate than it was bringing in. The person they offered it to did not take it.

Let me say this a different way. What boosted my interest in going this direction was that there was a bombing in two states—one in New York and one in Los Angeles. And this caused the storage facility at the airport to tighten up on security. And it was taking a long time for a person to check a bag in (or) to take a bag out. And I felt it could be simplified. That was part of the thinking. I wanted to include in that, baggage repair and everything pertaining to the needs of a passenger as far as baggage was concerned. Baggage repair, baggage sale—sale of all travel items like boxes and stuff like that. And we, in Hawai'i, use a lot of boxes. So this was the idea I had been working on, trying to make it as diversified as possible so it would have income enough to carry it. Pick up and delivery from the airport.

So I opened up in 1981, Airport Baggage Center, up here on Nimitz Highway, Nimitz Business Center. I had lockers, and I had bulk storage. I would pick up (and deliver) to and from the airport. The colors were green and white, and I say that because I have a point to make. Japan Airlines was one of the carriers that endorsed the concept outright. We provided a service for Japan Airlines, their passengers, when they were flying to and from the Mainland. We had an agreement with them to meet their passengers at the gate, claim their bags, and store them and return them to the passenger when they departed. Passengers

traveling on Japan Airlines from Japan readily accepted the idea. It was a new concept here in this country. In Japan, they had a functioning organization going. I don't know how long. They had the same colors. My colors were green and white. We almost had the same---I had ABC, Airport Baggage Center. I think they had the same letters. Japanese coming here had no reservations about turning their bags over to us. It was something they had been accustomed to. I think the one in Japan must've been on a much bigger scale than mine because, I think, they may have been leasing bags and all that sort of thing. Japanese from Japan had no problem with it.

Others. . . . When we would meet them at the airport had reservations because they couldn't see where the bags were being put. They couldn't see the bags going off, and I was off the airport. My prices were much better. I was very competitive with the airport. All you had to do was come in. You didn't have to stand in line and fill out a lot of papers and show your identification. All you had to do was give me the information as to when you were returning, and we would take (your bags), give you a claim check and you were on your way. We tried to narrow it down to about three minutes.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-88-4-93; SIDE ONE

EG: I could get a permit for a van to pick up and deliver bags to the airport. I could have my people, and I had the skycaps from all around the airport, from Aloha Airlines all the way to United Airlines. Hawaiian [Airlines] and all the rest of them. The skycaps would call for the services because we were giving them a percentage of the storage rate. I paid them for them recommending the service. But the state would not allow me, first of all, a clutch at the airport. They had bins. If I could have had a bin at the airport (the passenger) could have seen his bags going in there. [Hawai'i State] Department of Transportation would not allow me to put my brochures in the information stands out there, and it's not because of the quality because I had quality brochures. They said they couldn't endorse that.

During the time when they [airport] were overflowing, they could not handle the volume, then they would call me. Some of their people called me. When they were down and empty they would knock my services. So I was competing with the state. I started [Airport Baggage Center in] February 1981, and it was slowly growing. I needed maybe more time and more capital in order to keep it going. But then the airlines started to break off from Honolulu Airport Porter Service. And I, in turn, teamed up with a former employee of mine who was now manager of Honolulu Airport Porter Service—to take some of the contracts that the other company wasn't taking. Honolulu Airport Porter Service wasn't getting some of them so Anderson and I decided to go out—it was my suggestion—and start getting some of these contracts.

WN: You weren't connected with Honolulu Airport Porter Service?

EG: Yes, I was. I was a supervisor. As soon I started doing this, I gave my resignation [in 1981].

WN: Mm hmm. I see.

EG: I gave the resignation and it was accepted. We weren't taking contracts from Honolulu Airport Porter Service. These were contracts that Honolulu Airport Porter Service wasn't getting. Some that they didn't have and were not aggressively going after. So by June 1, I had gotten a significant amount of the contracts. One thing about that Airport Baggage Center, it did serve that idea I had, and that was as far as the (evolvment) from a skycap to another type of business. I could put in a skycap in that building, in that [baggage storage] facility there, and within maybe (an) hour or two, he knew everything about it because it was something that he had done ever since he had been a skycap. It was a natural thing for a skycap to operate. It is still a natural for skycaps, and I'm thinking seriously about going back into it. I'm thinking very seriously about starting it again. I'm doing a lot of research. I don't want to make the mistakes I made before, but I'm looking at location, I'm looking at some. . . . This is another story.

So, but June 1, I then start back into this line of work that I'm in now. And the baggage storage room, for more than one reason, maybe I wasn't in a position to carry it long enough. Maybe again I didn't turn that screw just one more niche. Just one more turn of the screw. The mere fact that I didn't makes me think why would I go back into it now because I'm trying to capitalize on some of the mistakes. I haven't done it yet, but it's the driving thing behind me. So about 1985, I phased it out and just concentrated on the porter services.

WN: Under the name Versatile Services?

EG: Yeah, Versatile Services, [Inc.].

WN: Now, Airport Baggage Center was part of Versatile Services?

EG: Dba [doing business as].

WN: I see. Dba.

EG: It was good.

WN: So from '81 to '85, you were a baggage storage company as well as a skycap company [Airport Baggage Center and Versatile Skycap Services, dba Versatile Services, Inc.]?

EG: Yes.

WN: And then from '85 on, you phased out the baggage and became solely skycap?

EG: Yeah. When I first incorporated, though, we incorporated not for porter services at all. We incorporated for a janitorial service because the man and I who'd gone into this and incorporated together, he had been in the janitorial services at one time, wanted to get into it again. So we teamed up and formed this corporation as a baggage storage room and a janitorial service. When the porter services contract came along, the first thing to go was the janitorial service. We just dropped that. And then we had, at that time, just the baggage, Airport Baggage Center, and the skycap service up until about 1985. And the baggage center, combined with the porter services, would have been able to survive but there was something that had happened, and I have to bring this in, too. It wasn't because the baggage center would not have been successful. It was because when I went into the porter services June

1. . . . Remember I told you that most of us got into the business undercapitalized? Okay. This is what happened with me. I had gotten a bank loan back in February to open (the) baggage center. And by June, most of that money had been used (for) organizational stuff like that. So when the porter service came along, I didn't have any capital. I had a business, and the business was trying to catch hold. And then we got six airlines. Now, the airline contracts, in those days, were very good. But you billed them one month after services were rendered. They usually paid you about one month after you billed them. So you've got two months. You've got sixty days before you receive any income. But during those sixty days you have a payroll, you've got four payrolls, coming up. So here I am without any money. And what I had done was try to be as impressive and provide as great a service. I'm back into the business and I want to prove that I am the operator, I am the man for this type of service. So we staffed heavy. We gave A-number-one service. We hired possibly more than. . . . I sort of cut my staff to the bare bone now, but I may have had more than I needed in those days, but I carried a heavy payload. And to not to have any income for sixty days, and pay out everything I could rake and scrape to keep my employees, I got behind in taxes. And this tax thing stayed with me. I never did really get rid of it. I still have remnants hanging on even to now. I'm in much better shape now. So with taxes and everything else and with the baggage center not bringing in any income hardly at all or very little, I decided to dissolve it. Close it up.

WN: I see.

EG: So it wasn't the concept. It was the undercapitalization at the time. My payroll for that first two months was very heavy. I used every bit of money saved, but I didn't pay the taxes. And it was very competitive in those days, too, when I first started out. So I paid my guys and didn't pay Uncle Sam and the state. So that's the main reason why I couldn't stay in that thing.

WN: So today you have two airport contracts, right?

EG: Yes. Japan Airlines and [Northwest Airlines]. . .

WN: How many employees do you have?

EG: Twenty-six.

WN: Twenty-six. And they're all skycaptains? You don't have administrative help or anything?

EG: My daughter works part-time for me. I take care of most (of the) administrative needs. Twenty-six, some part-timers, some full-timers. About two-thirds full-time, about one-third part-time.

WN: And how many such companies are there today?

EG: Oh, my lord, I don't know (WN chuckles). But the biggest out there now is Paradise [Skycap Service, Inc.]. This was the man and I that started out together in '81. He's the biggest now. (There are) one, two, three, four. There are about five companies now that are known as skycap (companies). But then you take some of the trucking companies that also have porter services doing the same thing, in a sense. You have maybe anywhere from five, ten or more.

Yes, more than that, because you have some travel agencies and ground transportation people who are doing the same thing. They're just not contracting with the airlines. But it's the same thing. There are several porter companies out there.

I'm thinking of starting a skycap school. If I could combine---skycaps and bellhops are not that different. I'm doing some research. If I feel that there's a need for bellhops to get the same training, and it's just servicing passengers, I will definitely go with it. But I'm looking at a school that will serve skycap needs for the state. You've got bartenders' school. You've got this or you've got all sort of schools, right? And ours is a profession. It's definitely a profession. It requires as much skill, as much training as a lot of the other organizations. We do primarily the same thing a ticket agent does except we don't write tickets. But the passengers that they deal with, we deal with on the same basis, and they go through extensive training. But I'm researching it. This would be a part of the diversification of airport baggage that I'm going into. I'm seriously thinking about it.

WN: Okay, I'm going to ask you to make some assessments here. Number one, the business climate in Hawai'i and situation with Blacks in Hawai'i, for example, in business. I remember we talked a little bit about this before in terms of proprietorships and so forth for Blacks in Hawai'i. What is your assessment of the situation today?

EG: Of Blacks in business in Hawai'i?

WN: Mm hmm.

EG: (EG sighs.) I wonder? I think we're operating under a handicap, and that handicap was self-imposed. This is all my point of view and you know that. The thing that we accomplished many years ago when we first came to Hawai'i is now coming back, to my way of thinking, to haunt us, and that was our ability to assimilate so very successfully into the community, and that's to lose our identity. And in losing our identity, we lost one or two other things. We lost, in my estimation, political clout, economic clout, and along with that, a certain degree of our culture. We're not a united people. We are a group, and I don't know if I'm using the term "group" [correctly] or not, but we are a body of achievers, individual achievers. Some more successful than others. And I think there's a reason for this. There's a reason for our not wanting to be a unit and that was because of our background. It was necessary that we be a unit, because when we're on the Mainland our society did not permit anything else. And because we had to be with ourselves we, in turn, did business with ourselves, and you had Black[-owned] businesses. One of my pet gripes, though, is that we only competed with ourselves instead of competing with the best. That's the gripe. But, nevertheless, we did have Black businesses.

Over here, we didn't have the unity, and because we didn't have the unity, we didn't have the opportunity to have businesses that would draw on Black clientele because there was no Black clientele to draw on. And what we were trying to do was avoid anything that would come close to any sort of unity, which unity, in our estimation, equated with ghetto. So we decided, "Look, let's not create a ghetto. And if we're not together there can be no ghetto," so we just disappeared into the Hawaiian society. But by doing so, no one knows we're here. We're an invisible group of people, and there are a heck of a lot of us. There are a lot of Blacks in this state. And most of us. . . . And again, I'm using terms here that's debatable. A lot of us married local women. And a lot of us have local children. And a lot of those children, our

offspring, have grown up. They're adults. And what you have, the wives regardless of what ethnic group they come from, when they marry a Black person or a Black man, their interests becomes the same. The interests of their children become the same. And you combine, put all these people together, and you have a large number of people out there. If they could come together, and I don't mean to create a ghetto, I mean come together for some common good, some common cause, then you would create a certain political clout because politicians are going to look at this. We had a meeting in 1985 that was brought together by a man named Harold Franklin. Harold Franklin pulled together a group of people in 1985. He wanted Black and professional people. He was able to draw together 106 people. And Abercrombie? How do you pronounce that?

WN: [U.S. Representative] Neil Abercrombie.

EG: Yeah, was a speaker there. And he was the first one to say, "Look, you people are invisible. Nobody knows you're here." And politicians count numbers. And until we decide—and I don't know if this is ever going to be possible now—to undo what we did, then we won't have the political clout that we need. We will not have the economic clout that would be possible. Not as a group. And the few high achievers that we have, have done so in spite of. We have a contractor here, good friend of mine. He's been quite successful, but he's been an individual achiever.

WN: What about yourself? Do you consider yourself a high achiever?

EG: I don't know. I consider myself taking care of a need—a drive and a need. A need that I have in order to take advantage of an opportunity. And I don't think I've taken advantage much of it. You see, I've thought about this. See, other ethnic groups come to America, the land of opportunity, to take advantage of the opportunities that exist. Hawai'i provided me with that. I don't know if I've exercised that potential that I could have. I've sort of delved into things. I was talking to a friend of mine at the airport a few days ago, and she didn't quite understand what I meant. We were discussing almost the same thing. And I said that on the farm, you'll find—and I used the equation of the pig—they have the runts in a litter of pigs. And then the runt is the one that runs in and out of the trough, in and out of the trough. And he never stays in one place and feeds long enough, whereas the one who's fattened is the one that stays right in one spot. He never moves, okay? I've been in and out. I've gotten into too many things. I should have stayed somewhere, then I would've been fat. There are no obstacles here to prevent me from achieving. That's one of the things Hawai'i offers. And I think some of us have seen that. There are [Black] business people here. But they are few and (far) between, and I think that if we had more unity, we would have had more successful business people.

I know one thing, we are too much into the service industry. And I think we ought to go into some phase of producing some of the things, and I think we should do it on a quality basis that would supply the needs of all people, not just Black people. We, by and large, to my way of thinking, are only in the service industry. I guess the greatest criticism of me is that I'm in the service industry, and someone should break that mold and produce something. And it's not a lack of know-how. It takes daring and it takes adventure. It takes an adventurous nature to go out there. But I don't think Blacks in Hawai'i or anywhere in the country or anywhere at all are going to be successful until they become producers. Producing anything, any of the things that people use.

We have tried some things and usually it's been in the restaurant business. There have been one or two that I have seen who have gone into this business on a scale that I thought merit some sort of praise. There have been some who just got into it and just made do. This thing still comes back to me. If you're going to do it, do it well. And again, some of these things, there's a natural line of evolvement from one business to another. You take that laundry. [EG points to Young Laundry & Dry Cleaning sign.] Okay? Young Laundry. Laundry, in general. Did you know when I was a child, my aunt used to take in laundry. We would go and pick it up, bring it back. She would clean it, iron it, and we'd take it back. That's a pick-up-and-delivery service. We did this for---we Blacks did it. It never got beyond that stage. It should have evolved into this sort of [business] thing. That's a natural line of evolvement.

WN: That's how it probably started.

EG: Yes. Pick up and delivery. If we're going into the restaurant business, I think this should be another. This is a service business. But this is one of the things we should have done, but we never, to my knowledge, did it on a big enough scale. You've got Italian foods, you've got French foods, you've got Chinese foods, you've got Japanese foods. You've got all these various foods who started out as ethnic foods for a certain group. Evolved into big, big, big time. We never got---and I've looked over the Mainland. Soul food. Southern food. Anyone who has anything of note, (is) White-owned. And you know who's doing the cooking in a lot of cases? Blacks. Blacks doing all the cooking. But the White owned it. Why didn't we move into that direction? Something's wrong.

And this is one of the criticisms I have of me and anyone else who has not taken that direct line of. . . . This is why I went into this baggage thing with the same thinking. There are other things. We've done many other things that now someone else took over. The Italians, I think, in San Francisco took over the shoeshine business and made that much more sophisticated than we ever would have thought. That's way down here with other types of services. So, I don't know. Those are my feelings as far as what we did, what we haven't done, what we should do, what we could've done. What we still should do.

In Hawai'i, I think we're getting further from that. I don't see us moving in the direction that I would think we would have after all these years. And, I guess, this is another one of my pet peeves. You know, I started out by saying that when I first came here, the Filipino and, to some degree, the Japanese, because of the war were down on the bottom of the totem pole. But they have all moved up. I don't see us having moved up, not to the degree that the others, the progress that the others have made because at that time there was nothing to stop us. There was no barriers here to stop us. That's one of the things that Hawai'i has given me is the freedom of barriers.

WN: So the potential in Hawai'i is better than nationally.

EG: Yes. Like I said, you find a lot of people coming to America, because where they came from the barriers were there, and they came to America where the barriers weren't there. The barriers weren't really there, I guess, as far as I was concerned but less so in Hawai'i. Funny thing. I think people in Hawai'i wanted to see the Black man forge ahead. This is why these individual achievers (did well). If they had anything going at all, they could always find someone who'd come along and assist them. Always someone to give him assistance. As long as you have something to offer. If you've got anything to offer here, Hawai'i will help you.

This is my feelings. And to not take advantage of that, I think, is a gross error on our part. I can understand what our feelings were from the background from which we came, but we tend to dwell on that too long or let that become a crutch. Maybe I'm being overcritical, but this seems to be what we've done to some degree. Used it as a crutch.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops.)

END OF INTERVIEW

AN ERA OF CHANGE

Oral Histories of Civilians in World War II Hawai'i

Volume I

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

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